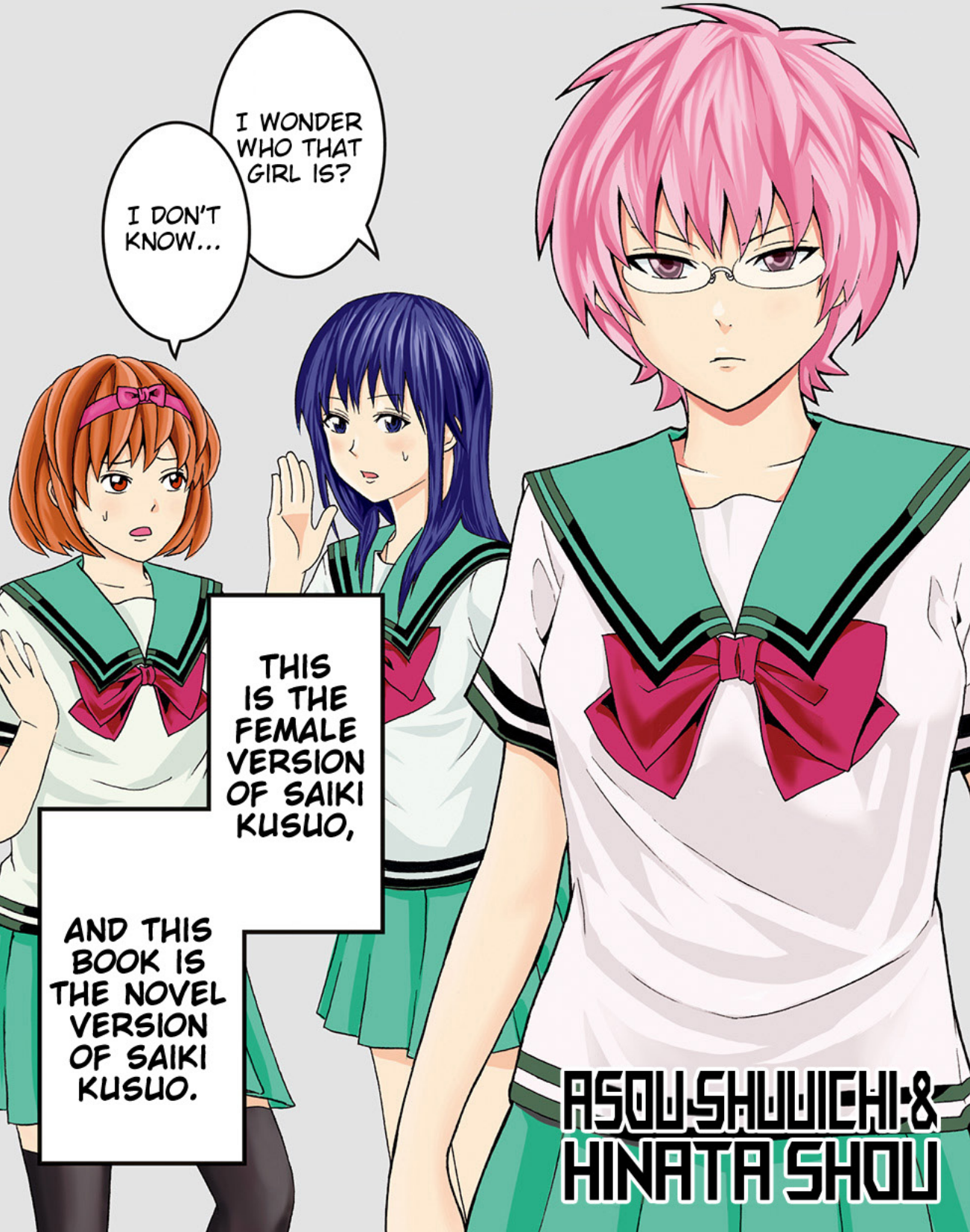
THE DISASTROUS LIFE OF

SaikiK.

EXTRA STORY OF PSYCHICS 2

【小説】JUMP j BOOKS


I WONDER WHO THAT GIRL IS?
I DON'T KNOW...
THIS IS THE FEMALE VERSION OF SAIKI KUSUO,
AND THIS BOOK IS THE NOVEL VERSION OF SAIKI KUSUO.

ASOU SHUUICHI & HINATA SHOU

BANANA BANK
チョコレート
水あめ
おめん
500
6ヶ
300
10ヶ
500

If you enjoyed this light novel, please support Asou-sensei and Hinata-sensei by buying their work.

Authors: Asou Shuuichi & Hinata Shou
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Disclaimer

This second volume of the novelization references chapter 73 of the manga a lot. This chapter wasn't adapted into the anime, so I highly recommend reading it before reading this volume to enhance your experience.

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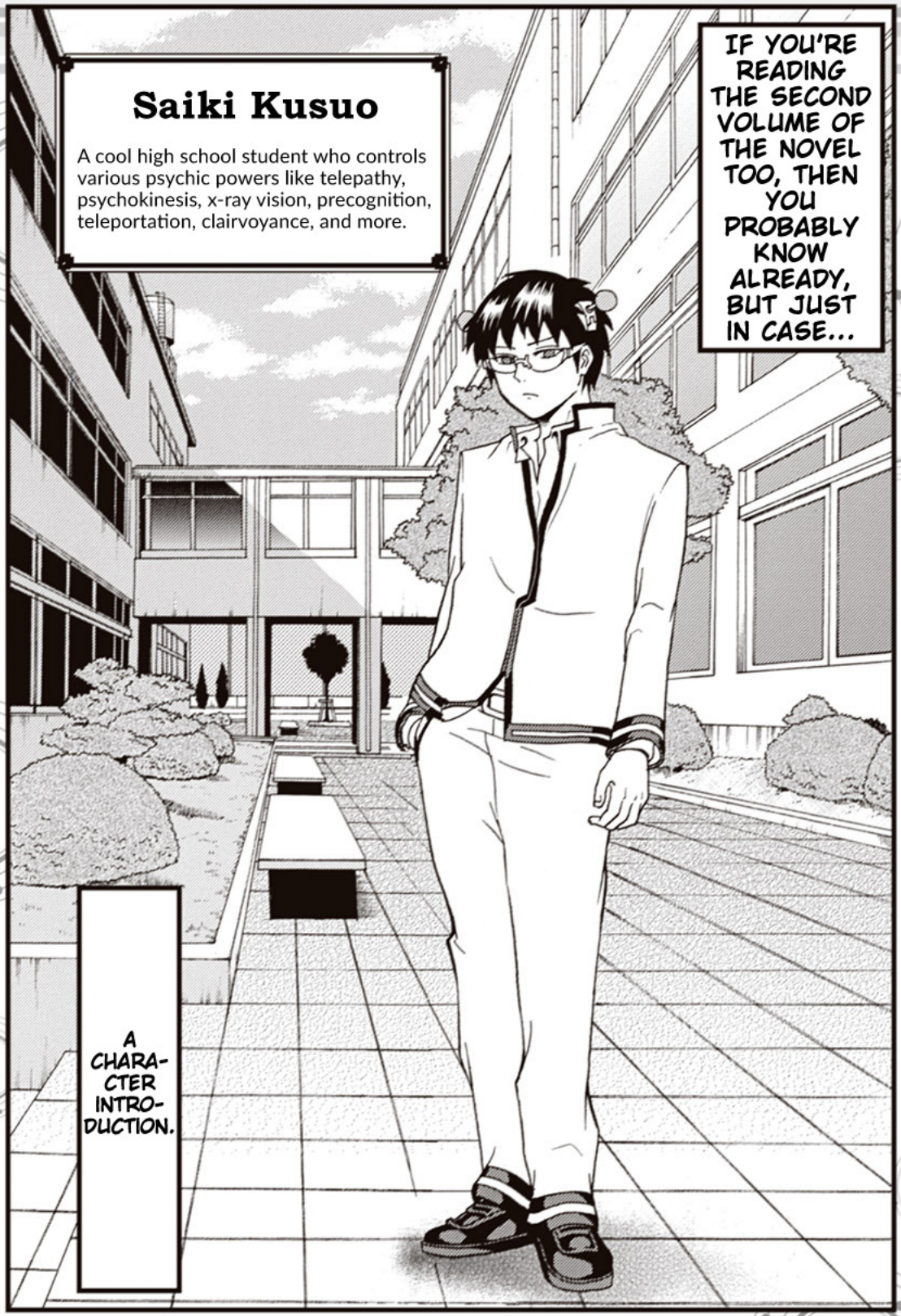
Saiki Kusuo
A cool high school student who controls various psychic powers like telepathy, psychokinesis, x-ray vision, precognition, teleportation, clairvoyance, and more.
IF YOU'RE READING THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE NOVEL TOO, THEN YOU PROBABLY KNOW ALREADY, BUT JUST IN CASE...
A CHARA-CTER INTRO-DUCTION.

STORY

His name is Saiki Kusuo, and he's a psychic. His extraordinary abilities, envied by everyone, are the root cause of his unhappiness. Saiki's motto has always been to keep his psychic powers to himself, to keep a low profile, and to keep a distance from others. However, his classmates, each with their own quirks, suddenly start getting closer! As such, unavoidable disasters strike Saiki...! This novel is the second volume of the novelization, which not only delves into the everyday life of Saiki, but also holds unexpected twists and turns.

Nendou Riki

A mysterious idiot that calls Saiki his partner.

Kaidou Shun

A universally branded chuunibyou. He's the self-proclaimed Jet Black Wing!?

Hairo Kineshi

A hot-blooded and lively boy.

Teruhashi Kokomi

A perfect and beautiful girl.

Toritsuka Reita

A spirit medium with a lot of desires.

Kuboyasu Aren

Ex-delinquent that turned his life around.

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Afterword

★ This work is a work of fiction. It is not related to any real person, group, or incident.

Chapter 1 The Disastrous Life of Toritsuka Reita

Toritsuka Reita's Perspective

My name is Toritsuka Reita. I'm a spirit medium. Wait, why are you closing the book?! Please, spare me. It's finally my turn to shine, and you're trying to close the book…

Huh? Why not Saiki-san, you ask?

Of course he isn't here. After all, I'm the protagonist of this novel. Why are you closing the book again?! Seriously, please stop.

Sigh… Even though I'm not a esper, the fact that I can tell everyone reading this is about to close the book is just sad… Seriously, what's the deal with the power level of espers anyway? Telepathy, psychokinesis, x-ray vision… it's not fair! Oh, and did you know Saiki-san can even transform into a girl? That's just unfair!

I know that each of Saiki-san's powers comes with a drawback. Saiki-san is always saying "good grief, drawbacks this, drawbacks that" as though he's reciting a nembutsu, you know? But still, it's unfair! I can't accept it. Despite having powers myself, why can't I do anything like him?

(TL Note: "Nembutsu," also known as "Nianfo," is a Buddhist practice of continuously repeating the name of the Amida Buddha as an act of devotion and gratitude for enlightenment.)

Ordinarily, I see ghosts and talk to them. That's it?

Meanwhile, Saiki-san can even astral project. And he can just take out the spirit of a person who's been knocked out… What the hell is up with that… It's just not right…

If a psychic can do all of that, then what's the point of being a "spirit medium" anymore?

That's why I recently pushed myself to learn a technique that allows spirits to possess me. I worked tirelessly because I believed it's not good to stay the same all the time. It was a task that demanded immense effort, and throughout it, I had the constant worry of my screen time diminishing.

With this technique I acquired through extreme desperation, I was certain I could attempt a comeback and become popular with girls. But instead of making a comeback, I nearly met my end, was rescued by Saiki-san and ended up being laughed at!

Geez, every time I ponder the meaning of espers, I inevitably end up pondering the meaning of spirit mediums too!

Initially, my perspective was that the powers of an esper and a spirit medium were comparable. They both possessed a unique ability. That's what I believed at first.

But don't you think the gap is just too wide? What's with this overwhelming disparity between the two? Is this some kind of harassment?

Compared to other manga, the way this manga treats spirit mediums is way too cruel! Why can't you let me be cool and yell stuff like "ha!" It's absurd! When it comes to spirit mediums, it's not an exaggeration to say that yelling "ha!" is our trademark… At this rate, I have no idea what the purpose was of being born in and living in a temple.

If I could, I would want to be in a manga where spirit mediums are treated a bit more favorably. I pray that someday that'll happen, and that the title will be something like "The Lustful Life of Toritsuka R.," where each chapter would feature a seductive female ghost and a sexy high school or college girl encountering some kind of trouble. My sexy self would provide a solution for them and receive a "fitting" reward. In this manner, I would create an astonishingly socially conscious and philosophical work of literature. But you know, sexy female ghosts are actually hard to come by… even though I'm always looking for them.

Therefore, I'm always looking to come up with practical uses for this spirit medium ability. I'm constantly wondering if there's anything I can do to make use of these abilities. Essentially, I want to be praised and admired by others using my spiritual powers. That is, I want to be popular with girls. Well, to be blunt about it, I want to somehow get my hands on some boob—oops, that was close. I need to be pure.

To achieve that goal, I'm going to the all-powerful psychic Saiki-san to ask him for a favor. And if I make him feel guilty, Saiki-san will help me out, won't he? Even though Saiki-san tells me every day that I'm smeared with worldly desires, for my part I happen to think I'm normal. Saiki-san is just too simple.

I head towards Saiki-san's seat in the neighboring class, but Saiki-san should already know that I'm coming to see him. Psychic powers are truly convenient, aren't they?

It was a break time. As always, Saiki-san was holding a book in one hand and sitting in his seat.

“Hi Saiki-san!” I say from behind. Then, while holding the book, Saiki-san quietly stands up. Then, glancing at me with what I thought were cold eyes, he leaves the classroom.

“Wha—?! Saiki-san, please wait!”

Confused after that, I follow him, flying out into the corridor.

“Saiki-san! Huh? What do you mean: ‘Good grief, a Toritsuka chapter?!’ That’s so mean!”

I follow Saiki-san, who continues walking without hiding his disgusted expression.

“What’s so bad about chapters with me in them? Sometimes they’re good, right? There are lots of people who want to read a Toritsuka chapter, you know! The editorial department also received many requests to that effect, you know… Ah, hey, hold up!”

I jump at Saiki-san, who had still been walking briskly, and cling to his waist.

“There really were requests for me! Oh, the number? About four… wait!!”

As Saiki-san continues walking briskly, I keep clinging onto him and get dragged along.

“I have a request, Saiki-san! Please wait, Saiki-saaan!”

As I keep getting dragged along while yelling pleas, we start to attract attention from the people around us. Whether it’s because I was yelling in a loud voice, or because I’m a hot guy who was born in a temple, I can’t be sure, but in any case all the students in the hallway are suddenly staring at me. No, to be exact, they’re staring at me and Saiki-san.

Saiki-san stops walking and frowns at the surrounding gazes. Despite still saying dark things like wanting to silence me by hitting me on the back of the head with a Buddha statue, it seems like he’s willing to hear me out.

“Umm, with regard to the thing I’m requesting, there’s an abandoned building on the outskirts of town.”

Saiki-san goes back to reading his book, but I continue.

“Right now, spirits are a bit of a hot topic in my class. They say there’s this haunted building where you can hear ominous laughter and growling sounds resembling a beast.”

Saiki-san flips the page without saying a word.

“Girls are into things like ghost stories and urban legends, right? So I want to actually go to the place, check it out, share the stories with the girls, and impress them. *(Since I’m a spirit medium, I’m curious about the types of ghosts that might be there. I want to find out, and reassure my frightened classmates)*,” I say, sharing my true thoughts with Saiki-san.

However, I must have messed up, as Saiki-san bluntly rejects me, pointing out that my thoughts and what I said were completely reversed.

Even so, I continue without being discouraged.

“So, Saiki-san, my request is for us to go to the abandoned building together. Please!” I ask, putting my hands together.

When it comes to important matters, the one you should trust and rely on more than anyone, even more than God and Buddha, is the psychic Saiki-san.

“Why together? Well it’s scary, so I want us to go together.”

With those few words he stops reading his book and looks up. As expected, he looks at me with a puzzled expression.

Yeah, I get it. I definitely understand his expression right now.

“You’re right Saiki-san, ghosts aren’t scary at all. As a matter of fact, they’re peaceful. The idea that ghosts are scary is nothing more than a product of human beings with a partial supernatural sense seeing the vague form of a ghost and considering that terrifying,”

I say, and then continue.

“The truly scary thing, Saiki-san, is the people.”

As I mumble that, I look off into the distance at nothing.

“The scariest thing in this sort of ghost hotspot isn’t the ghosts at all, but the people. It’s common to find that such locations attract local delinquents, and even more alarming individuals tend to gather there for illicit activities.

If we were to encounter them, it would be disastrous. Furthermore, since it's a deteriorated building, there's also a danger of accidents occurring…"

In that sort of situation, spirit mediums are sadly powerless. You would be right in guessing that if a delinquent attacked a spirit medium, their guardian spirit would be at a loss for what to do.

This is where the all-powerful psychic would come into play. If only Saiki-san were present, nothing would be frightening at all. And then tomorrow, when the conversation topic turns to the ghost hotspot, I'll instantly become the hero of all the girls by revealing the spirit's true nature. I will position myself as the most dependable and trustworthy guy, ensuring that when the girls visit different ghost hotspots or haunted houses at amusement parks, I will be the one they call upon to accompany them…

If that happens, it's inevitable that the "suspension bridge effect" will bring us closer to each other. As a result, the girls who are scared will not only get closer to me emotionally, but also physically.

(TL note: The "suspension bridge effect" is the phenomenon where people are more likely to develop romantic feelings for people they meet in places that evoke fear and anxiety, such as on suspension bridges.)

As a gentleman, I would never leave a scared and trembling girl behind. However, when walking together in the dim light, inevitably, there will be situations where a girl's chest unintentionally comes into contact with my arm. That's just an unavoidable consequence, you know? No, I don't have any ulterior motives.

Oh, but if possible, I'd like to be sandwiched between—Ah crap, my thoughts haven't been leaked, have they?!

Suddenly I snap back to my senses, only to find Saiki-san looking at me as if I were a piece of garbage. W-What kind of look is that… That isn't a very good look for a Weekly Shonen Jump protagonist, Saiki-san…

Still looking at me with a cold gaze, Saiki-san slowly starts to leave. Not only our emotional distance but also our physical distance is increasing. I cling to Saiki-san once again, refusing to let go.

"I'm begging you Saiki-san! You're the only one I can rely on. The girls in my class, and female readers around the world, want to see a spirit medium be cool sometimes! I want to repair my reputation and stuff! Please!"

I know I'm acting embarrassing, but sometimes you have to make sacrifices for what's important. After coming this far, I have to do whatever it takes to make sure the Toritsuka chapter turns out alright in the end… I decide to use my trump card.

Back during our school trip to Okinawa. Saiki-san's psychic powers went haywire, causing quite the chaotic situation. In order to prevent the situation from escalating, I desperately helped and supported him.

Actually, I better not bring that up. I could say "Remember that? That sure was tough…" but it's probably better to leave that in the past.

However, just as I recall that incident, I sense an incredibly hostile aura emanating from Saiki-san… How do I put this… It gives me the sense that if I used that approach, I would probably—no, definitely—lose my life…

But I have another ace up my sleeve, Saiki-san!

"Coffee blancmange," I say quietly.

"Coffee blancmange… do you know it, Saiki-san?"

After I ask that, Saiki-san stops walking.

"I found a store that has really good coffee blancmange…!"

Coffee blancmange.

Put simply, it's coffee jelly that's completely white. Even though its appearance is white, its flavor and smell are very close to coffee.

I inquired among some ghosts, and conducted an investigation to gather information about Saiki-san's food preferences. He he he, it was the first time in a while that my spirit medium powers came in handy.

"If you come with me, I'll tell you the location of that store."

But Saiki-san, to whom I was still clinging, looked down on me, and with a scoff, a thin smile appeared on his face. Oh shit! While speaking, I had revealed the location of the store in my thoughts! At this rate, he'll take the information and run.

I scream without a moment's delay—"I'll treat you! No, I mean, please let me treat you!"

Saiki-san lets out a sigh and finally nods in agreement. What's that? I'm persistent? Well, as a guy, sometimes you have to be this way to get things done, Saiki-san.

———◆———

After school

We look up at the abandoned building, which is illuminated by the setting sun.

This building has even more signs of wear than I had imagined. The wall is covered in splatters and cracks and stuff. If you held a photoshoot here from this angle, it would end up looking like a ghost sighting photo. Did you know? Most of the ghost photos they show as evidence on ghost-themed TV shows are misjudgements that occurred because of the angle of the photo. Out of the shows I've seen, about nine out of ten of them seemed like they weren't actually ghosts, but just a trick of the light and such.

Huh? The remaining one? Ah, those were shy ghosts.

Anyway, with the stains and cracks on the walls, as well as the overgrown vegetation surrounding the building, this is truly a picture-perfect haunted spot. The combination of being on the outskirts of town and the fact we came in the evening when no one would be around, gives it an ominous atmosphere. It's definitely the kind of place that would spark rumors at school.

Next to me, Saiki-san is also looking up at the abandoned building with a grimace, as if he's just chewed on a bitter-tasting insect. That's surprising. However, even as a spirit medium myself, I can't help but find this atmosphere quite unsettling, so it's understandable that Saiki-san would feel the same way.

Guess I'll try to lighten the mood for now.

"What's wrong, Saiki-san? Do even you get nervous over this? But don't worry. If we have a ghostly opponent, it'll be okay since I'm here."

As soon as I say this and laugh, Saiki-san becomes displeased and starts to leave.

"Ah—wait, please! I'm treating you, I'm treating you as much as you want! After this let's go eat coffee blancmange together!"

I don’t even know how many times this has happened today, but once more I frantically restrain him. Since spirit mediums are useless against anything but ghosts, I’m in serious trouble if he leaves.

Throughout the journey here, Saiki-san repeatedly emphasized to me that he didn’t come because he wanted to eat coffee blancmange. He reiterated it to me every few minutes, but it’s clear that he’s not being entirely honest. Uh-oh, I’m being glared at…

Avoiding the grumpy Saiki-san’s line of sight, I turn my back and begin to inspect the entrance of the abandoned building. There are some chains that have come loose on the slanted “No Entry” sign. Upon inspecting the padlock I see that it’s indeed broken, as I thought.

“As expected, humans…”

If it were ghosts, the lock wouldn’t be broken. I open the door slowly, and peek inside the dimly lit building, observing the state of the surroundings.

As expected, the place is deserted and uninhabited. No one is inside, neither humans nor ghosts.

“By the looks of it, there are no ghosts here. Well, that’s to be expected. Being in such a desolate place on the outskirts of town wouldn’t be enjoyable for them either. There are no convenience stores nearby, and the train station is far away…”

While saying this, I enter the building. Turning my head, I speak to Saiki-san, who entered after me.

“For ghosts, practical matters such as whether the neighborhood has a convenience store or not are quite important. After all, without one they wouldn’t be able to keep reading Jump anymore.”

For ghosts, students and salarymen who read manga in bookstores at a set time become like gods. Those people always attract swarms of ghosts reading manga together. Seeing such a sight never fails to amaze me.

So, to you who are currently reading this, if you happen to feel a presence around you, please resist the urge to turn around at all costs.

“Ah, Saiki-san! It looks like something is here!”

I stand still, having seen something move out of the corner of my eye. It had been a fleeting thing, but it’s definitely on the small side. Not a person. A mouse, or…

I want Saiki-san to confirm. Immediately, he shakes his head slightly. Since he didn’t feel anything, it seems like it was a ghost…

I strain my eyes to see whatever is lurking in the darkness. Upon doing this, I see the face of a dog emerging from its hiding place.

“A ghost animal?”

The girls in class were saying that they heard beastly groans. I see, by chance they must’ve sensed the dog’s presence or cries… If someone has partial spiritual senses, it’s not unthinkable that they would become scared of that.

But the reality is that it’s just a tiny dog. And a ghost. Ghosts can’t interact with the objects or humans of this world, so even if the ghost bared its teeth or if it was a fighting dog, it can’t actually bite anyone so there’s nothing to be afraid of.

For the time being, if I can drive away the dog, then the rumors of ghostly phenomena will end. And if I can settle the matter in this way, I’ll become

popular. It wasn't necessary for Saiki-san to come after all, huh. If a tiny dog is our opponent, then it's time for me, the spirit medium, to shine.

Well then, I'll show you the power of a spirit medium…!

"Shoo! Shoo! Go somewhere else! Shoo!"

I actively intimidate the dog as it approaches. As a spirit medium, my abilities are primarily limited to seeing and communicating with ghosts. But in this case, it's more than enough. After all, most ghosts are calm and understanding, so if I speak to them, they will usually comprehend.

"Shoo! Shoo! Go over there! Shoo!"

I wave my hands and try to drive the dog away. Saiki-san looks at me with a puzzled expression. That's right, he can't see this ghost dog…

The dog begins to bark at my feet. It continues barking over and over in its characteristic shrill voice. I step back, and without thinking I let out a pathetic cry.

"Ah! Wait, s-stop! Shoo, shoo!"

Even though it's a ghost and can't bite me, it's still scary to have a dog barking at you like crazy at point-blank range. Come to think of it, I just realized that despite ghosts generally being calm and understanding, spirit mediums don't have the ability to communicate with dogs in the first place. How did I end up in a situation where I still can't do anything?!

I nervously keep saying "shoo, shoo" and waving my hands around. As I do this, Saiki-san watches me quietly, looking put-off.

"You've got it wrong, Saiki-san! This isn't a solo comedy sketch!"

Saiki-san can't hear this dog's yapping either.

"Huh, what's that, Saiki-san? Rather than a dog barking, you can hear a person laughing? What are you saying?! There's a ghost dog right in front of me! Please take a look as well! At the dog!" I cry as the dog continues yapping, and with a sigh of "good grief," Saiki-san tears the thin, membrane-like glove on his hand. With that, he places his hand on my shoulder.

In this way, Saiki-san has begun using his psychometry ability. This is the ability to receive information stored in an object by touching it. Because it

is only activated by touching something, Saiki-san normally seals this ability by wearing transparent ultra-thin gloves.

And if he uses this ability to receive information on a person, then it seems like he's able to take on that person's sensations from their point of view. Therefore in this case, now that Saiki-san is touching me, he is able to experience my world—namely, the world of seeing ghosts.

How is it, Saiki-san? You're able to see it through your eyes, right? That vicious tiny dog!

"Hey, what's with that look of disbelief?! I mean, it's barking like crazy! Look at it! Even now that dog is trying to leap and bite me! Well, it's true that if it did bite something, its ghost body would just pass through, but still…"

I frantically pointed, and just as Saiki-san's eyes fell upon the dog, it stopped violently barking and became docile. It even starts wagging its tail…

"Huh? A chihuahua…? Kaidou…? Ah, now that you mention it, I've seen this cheeky face before. It was his guardian spirit, wasn't it?!"

Right when I transferred and was popular among the female students for telling them their guardian spirits, there was a time when I looked at the guardian spirits of Saiki-san's classmates. As Saiki-san said, I definitely saw this chihuahua at that time.

"But still, why is it here…? Is this a case of a lost spirit?"

"What is it, Saiki-san? You're wondering how a guardian spirit can become separated? As the name suggests, guardian spirits are ghosts who stick by someone and protect them, but if for some reason they leave, the protection will also leave, so it becomes a bit easier for that person to encounter misfortune."

As I proudly explain this, Saiki-san's face looks at me with a pitying expression.

"Well, it's true that my guardian spirit, Nendou senior, is never around… He's always roaming around and doesn't really fulfill the duties of a guardian spirit… But as a spirit medium, I can gather information from other spirits around me even if I don't have a guardian spirit, so I'll be fine. In that regard, I'm grateful to be a spirit medium."

I feel it balances out, but I won't think too deeply about that for now.

Saiki-san is brooding about something while gazing at the chihuahua. I cheerfully start talking.

"I get that you're worried since he doesn't have his guardian spirit with him, but since the chihuahua has a ghost body we can't touch it, and since it's a dog it can't understand speech. Don't worry. If we leave it alone, it'll return before long. Speaking from my own experience, even without a guardian spirit, you won't die… Ha ha…"

Those last few words ended up sounding kind of dark, huh…

At that moment, Saiki-san removed his hand from my shoulder, and his body fell down right there. As I watched in shock, his ghost form slowly exited his body.

"Astral projection." This too is one of Saiki-san's psychic powers. Why can't I, the spirit medium, do this…? No matter how you look at it, this is a spirit-related power, isn't it? I could peep into girls' locker rooms and girls' baths as much as I wanted. I'm jealous, but it can't be helped. Astral projection, I'm envious.

Having turned into a ghost-like body that can interfere with spirits, Saiki-san picks up the chihuahua.

The chihuahua that was baring its fangs at me just moments ago now behaves obediently and only wags its tail in Saiki-san's presence. This is a seriously cheeky chihuahua. Just because it ranked well in the popularity poll and appeared in only one panel doesn't mean it can get carried away.

(TL Note: The guardian spirit chihuahua ranked 11th in the popularity poll published in chapter 73 of the manga.)

Saiki-san, now in spirit form, holds the chihuahua and floats up.

"Huh? He's nearby so you're going to return it? Wait up, Saiki-saaan!"

He disappears through a wall and goes somewhere. In this abandoned building, me and Saiki-san's cast-off body have been left alone.

"So the ghost's true form is a chihuahua! Everything is resolved! With this, I'll become popular… I guess?"

It feels empty somehow. Like I didn't really do anything. It's like I'm once again reminded of the powerlessness of being a spirit medium…

I sigh to myself.

"At any rate, no matter what he says, Saiki-san cares about his friends, huh," I say while looking at Saiki-san's real body. In the first place, I need to keep watch over his soulless form. And since the chihuahua has been taken away and the mystery of this ghost spot has been solved, there's nothing else for me to do anyway.

"Nothing to do. That's it! No, I really shouldn't…"

Even if there's absolutely nothing to do, there's no way I'll prank Saiki-san by drawing on his face and stuff. Though I'm not a esper, I can tell with certainty that if I did that, there is a high likelihood of me being forcefully thrown off the building's rooftop. So it's in my best interest not to prank him.

Ah, in that case, I think it'll be more constructive to try and learn astral projection. I look down at Saiki-san's body. If he, an esper, can do it, then what will I do if I, a spirit medium, cannot? It's not just about peeping on girls anymore; this has become a matter of pride for me as a spirit medium.

Luckily, the location is this quiet, abandoned building on the outskirts of town. It's the perfect place to concentrate in. In order to lose this feeling of uselessness that I don't know what to do with, I'll practice while waiting for Saiki-san to return. I'll do some meditation and empty my mind.

Empty mind empty mind empty mind secrets of a woman's body empty mind I can't do this. I'm turned on so now I can't concentrate.

During that time, I completed three seconds of concentration.

Suddenly, a metallic "clang" sound resonates throughout the abandoned building. Startled, I duck instinctively. And then, with an incredible force, the sound of footsteps comes rushing down the stairs…

If there's the sound of footsteps, then that means this isn't a ghost. Was there someone on the upper floor?!

"Wait, what? Saiki-san didn't say anything about this! I mean, when is he coming back?!"

Someone is coming closer. In a panic, I hastily lift Saiki-san's body in my arms, ready to move.

"What?! What the hell?!"

The sound of running footsteps, growing closer and closer, is approaching rapidly. Nervously, I lift Saiki-san's arm over my shoulder and stand up. Suddenly, from the darkness at the end of the corridor, a man dressed in a pitch-black cloak, resembling a wizard, rushes out. And, even more surprising than that, gripped in the man's hand is a handgun…!

"Seriously, what the hell?!"

With a scene so excessively gut-wrenching, I felt instinctively that my life was in danger. Dragging Saiki-san along, I run away with desperation. Because it was so deep in the hood he was wearing, I can't see the face of the man who's following us. But he makes an appeal in a hoarse voice.

"H-Help… me…"

The voice he was able to let out in between gasping breaths was just like groans of the dead banished to hell. The man who had suddenly appeared with a gun is unable to conceal his trembling.

What is this? Isn't this genre different? Is this not a gag manga? Is this not the Toritsuka chapter? I mean, isn't it impossible to make a getaway while holding Saiki-san? Maybe I should just leave his body here for now… But, if Saiki-san were to return, there would be no opponent who could stand against us…!

This and other such thoughts rush through my mind in a single instant. All I can do is go over all the potential scenarios, and pray I choose the right one.

I decide to flee while carrying Saiki-san. The black-cloaked figure with a handgun pursues us. And to make matters worse, from behind them, a delinquent with a demonic expression swings an iron pipe and comes charging at us.

"Seriously whaaat?! What the hell?!"

Yelling in confusion, I run out the building, still carrying Saiki-san's cast-off body, and quickly take cover in the nearby grass. While holding my breath, I watch the black-cloaked figure with the handgun and the delinquent swinging the iron pipe run past as their voices fade away.

Thankfully, we managed to avoid being detected, thanks to the tall grass acting as a natural cover for us.

While my heart races from the incomprehensible events, my breathing returns to normal.

“What the hell was that? This isn’t just some haunted spot, this is a seriously dangerous building…”

I gulp and start shouting.

“Seriously though, where has Saiki-san gone? Saiki-saaan!”

———◆———

Kaidou Shun’s perspective

My name is the “Jet Black Wings.”

As you probably know, I’m the former legendary A-rank soldier. But lately, I’ve been thinking that my name in this world, Kaidou Shun, isn’t so bad. Hmph. Honestly, when did I become soft?

However, perhaps, it’s the unique presence that’s healing this loneliness deeper than the sea—my encounters with him—that have changed me so much… Because of him, I’ve grown to like this world. That’s how I feel…

In the past, I would have denied it. Attachments lead to weakness. I would have dismissed it as such. But now, spending time with him—with Saiki—has become surprisingly precious to me…

“Look, Saiki. This ordinary everyday life, these unchanged landscapes. I take pride in gazing at them with you. This is the world we’re protecting…” I muttered to myself in the abandoned building on the outskirts of town. Of course, Saiki wasn’t by my side.

“Hmm… these lines are pretty good. I’ll write them down.”

I retrieve my school noteb—no the forbidden grimoire “Chapter of Corpses” sealed since ancient times—from my school bag. I inscribe the enigmatic words which I had released a moment ago, just as I remembered them.

“Why am I doing such a thing?” Some may be wondering… Therefore, I shall explain.

Soon, I plan to invite my sworn friend Saiki to this abandoned building on the outskir—no, to this secret hideout. Once he sees this hideout which I secretly made, he should definitely be amazed.

The kind of face he'll make… kukuku, I'm already looking forward to it…

I look around at my surroundings. The anti-Dark Reunion poster I stuck to the wall, the magic circle I drew on the floor, and the candles I've lined up are creating a sinister atmosphere. This is truly my castle, my secret base. And Saiki will become the only one besides me who knows about this secret base.

Standing in the center of the magic circle, I raised both my arms.

"He he… ha ha ha ha… haaa ha ha ha! The 'Hour of Awakening' is near, Saiki!"

I laugh out loud, my voice echoing through the empty abandoned building. I love this moment so much. That's why whenever I come here, I make it a point to laugh like this.

Why am I so drawn to abandoned ruins like this? Why does my heart leap when I see pictures of ruins on the internet? Perhaps it's because of memories from a past life… No, memories from another world line that are causing this. That's the only explanation I can think of. It's like a nostalgic feeling, drawing me back to the ruins once again.

I close my eyes and remember. I see myself standing in a ruined city, looking up at the sky. The rain never stops. In my hands, there must have been some kind of cursed weapon. As a betrayer of the organization, I was probably forced to fight against my former comrades.

Thinking about it, the scene feels somewhat familiar. It does resemble something I've seen before. Fragments of memories… the forgotten past that I thought I had left behind…

"Heh… Is this some kind of omen? Suddenly remembering the past like this? Aah!"

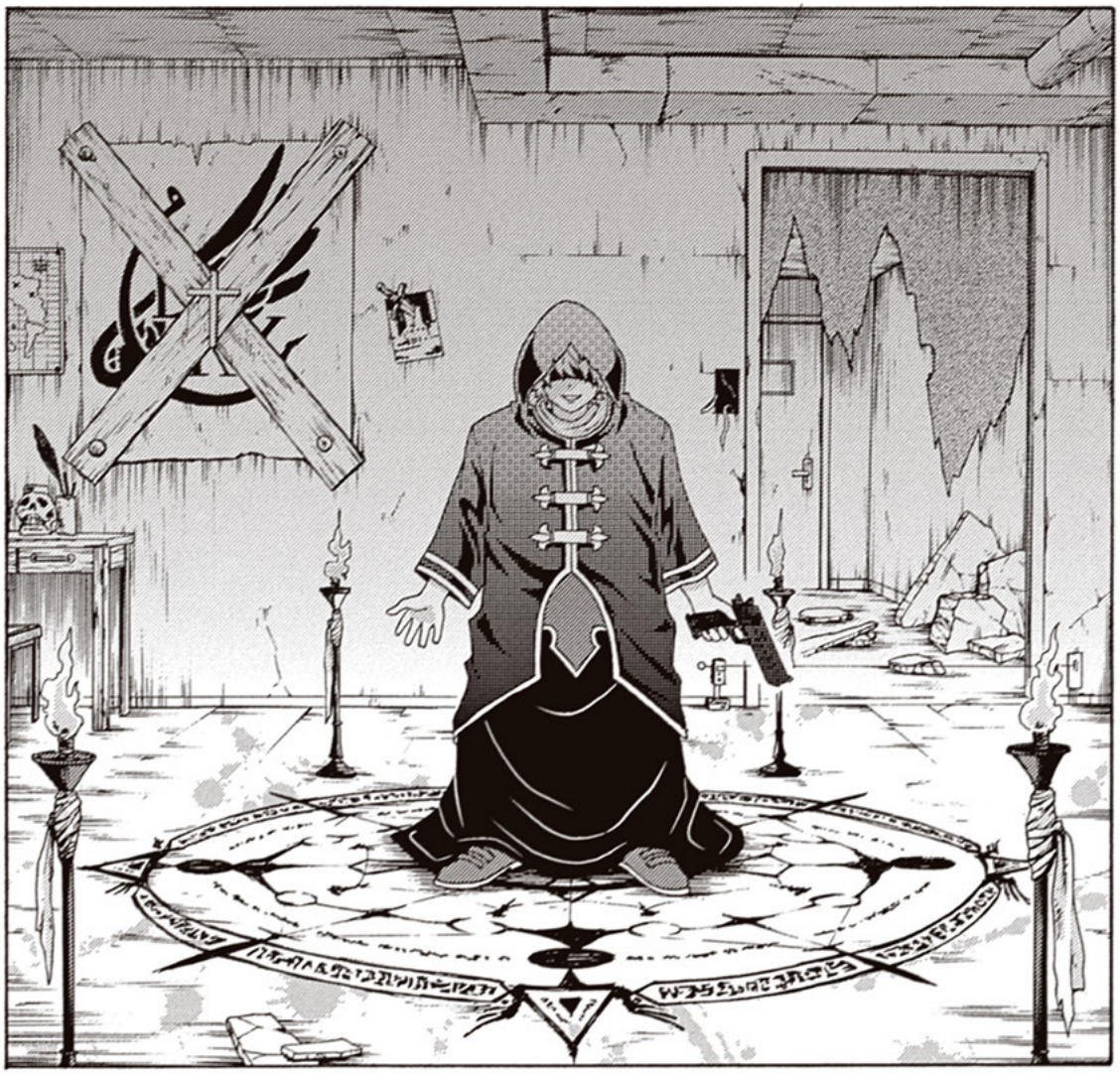
Suddenly, I fall flat on my back. I had accidentally stepped on my own cloak. That's right, I'm currently wearing a black magician-like cloak. When I pull the hood over my head, it practically hides my face. It's difficult to see from the front, especially in the dimly lit abandoned building. But compared to the magnificent feeling of being draped in

darkness like this, that's a trivial matter. As I deeply immerse myself in the hood, it brings back memories of a different world, when I was an assassin.

"I've been feeling a little off lately… Heh, maybe I've been possessed by something evil."

With a wry smile, I take out the jet-black model gun—no, the magic "Demonsbane" gun—from my school bag. The "Demonsbane" is a gun designed to shoot down the hidden demons in the darkness. It's my valuable partner that has been through countless battles with me.

"I should introduce you to Saiki…" I say to my magical gun "Demonsbane."



My silent partner basks in the setting sun, its dark barrel dimly gleaming. When Saiki comes to the hideout, he'll witness another side of me as a wielder of this enchanted firearm. I can't contain my excitement for that moment. I can already envision Saiki, with sparkling eyes, calling out my name, "Incredible, Shun!" Such a scene unfolds in my mind. As I imagine Saiki's reaction, I smirk.

Suddenly, a metallic sound echoes through the abandoned building with a "clang!"

"Huh?!"

I shout instinctively. Well, I'm not actually scared, of course. I have the characteristic of being able to purposefully control my fear. Having spent my days in a different world line, from the time I was a child, I threw my body into life-or-death battles every day, and have thus become a soldier whose sensations have been numbed. I can feel neither pain nor fear—this is the fate I have been burdened with.

Therefore, whenever something like this happens in my daily life, I deliberately act surprised. My former comrades (who are also numb) always found it strange.

"Why do you waste your time doing something like that?" they would ask.

However, whenever they said that, I always replied "Because that's more human-like."

In the first place, I already knew that this sound was just the sound of some old materials in the building moving around. I had actually seen through it from the beginning. However, I intentionally reacted to it. If a loud noise suddenly happens, wouldn't an ordinary person be startled? I only acted in the same way as a normal person would.

Honestly, it's easy for me to switch into combat mode instantly here. But if I were to do that, it would essentially announce to everyone around me that I am a skilled warrior. I am a fugitive from the organization, and I can't reveal my true identity. I never know when pursuers from the organization might appear, so my only option is to maintain the facade of an ordinary civilian. This is purely an act. I must admit, I played my role well.

Then, for a brief moment, a foolish thought crossed my mind: What if it's a ghost…? But there's no way such unscientific things exist. Ghosts are illusions created by people. They are nothing more than phantoms that the weakhearted perceive. However, if, for example, there were a ghost behind

me right now, I would want it to be something that cooperates with me, rather than something scary. Though there shouldn't be any ghosts, if there were, I would prefer it to be the kind of ghost that helps me defeat evil. A helpful spirit, in the form of the hellhound Cerberus or some similar entity, not a chihuahua.

Tsk, what the hell am I getting worked up about…?

I feel like I haven't been able to turn around for a while now, but it's not because I'm scared or for any stupid reason like that. I'm not afraid at all. It's just that I have a really stiff neck and shoulders, and I have this feeling that if I turn around, I might break something. Since the sound earlier was just a coincidence, I really have no problem turning around. But since my shoulders and neck are extremely painful, I don't need to force myself to turn around. I could turn around anytime if I wanted to, but there is just no point in doing so.

"Sigh… good grief… Do you plan to keep hiding?" I say quietly. Obviously, there is no reaction. If there was then that would be a problem.

"Kukuku…" I laugh. "Come on out… I know you're there."

I make my move. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that I grasp most things. So, while there shouldn't be any ghosts, if there were, they would be surprised and flustered by the fact that I have already sensed their presence. A ghost that has discerned that I am no ordinary person would quietly leave the scene. That's why I believe it's the cliché scenario of them being right in front of me when I turn around won't happen. It's practically ruled out. It clearly would contradict the natural order of events. Therefore, that possibility is completely off the table.

"Your killing-aura is leaking out, huh? Hah, what an amateur…"

As if delivering the final blow, I continue further.

"To be honest, I knew you were there from the beginning… kukuku… but I purposefully tolerated your presence. Do you understand why, scum?"

Phew, as I speak, the fear gradually dissipates. Well, to be honest, I was only pretending to be scared from the start. I think it's about time I can turn around without any worries.

"Yes, it was a 'trap'… to consign you to oblivion with my own hands!"

Raising my voice, I swiftly turn around. I point my demon gun, "Demonsbane," into the empty space—And there before me stands a man brandishing an iron pipe.

"Skreee!!"

Overwhelmed by fear, I'm unable to scream, and instead produce a "skreee" sound from deep in my throat. In times of true fear, humans are unable to scream.

Screams like "gyaaa" or "aaah" are nothing more than things used in manga and movies. For someone like me who's lived through real battlefields, this is common sense. Real screams are nothing like the half-hearted things of fiction.

Perhaps startled by my voice, the man starts swinging around the steel pipe. My plan of disturbing him with my scream must've worked. I immediately pretend to be startled and fall on my backside, barely dodging the steel pipe. This is a high-level technique to make the opponent believe you're helpless in order to catch them off guard. I pick myself up, and start running away.

Due to the dim lighting in the abandoned building and my hood covering my head, I couldn't get a clear view of the man with the pipe. However, in that brief confrontation, I caught sight of his disheveled hair, his bulging wide open eyes, and the veins popping on his face. His face resembled the fierce expression of a Hannya mask.

(TL Note: A "Hannya mask" is a traditional Japanese theatrical mask depicting a demon with a fearsome and vengeful expression.)

Sincere there are "?!" characters displayed in the air above him, it's a safe bet that he's a delinquent, and a fairly dangerous one at that. No, if things continue like this, he's the one who will be in trouble.

It has been a long time since I have felt the emotion of "fear," and if I'm not careful, I might lose control of myself. There is a danger that the dark force, "Black Beat," dwelling in my right arm could go berserk. That's why I'm keeping my distance from him. Even though he's a delinquent, I have the sort of kindness which leaves me unable to bring myself to take his life, but I can see how at first glance it looks as though I'm escaping.

However, the foolish delinquent follows me and swings the steel pipe around.

I pretend to be slow-footed every day, but just for now I run at my full strength.

I deliberately portray myself as having poor athletic ability.

If my former comrades (who are also numb) saw this, they would probably fail to comprehend the reason behind my actions. However, I would respond "It's because it's more in line with being human."

I descend the stairs, stumbling along the way. The hood is a hindrance, so I can't see in front of me very well, and the cloak's flapping makes it hard to run. Why have I taken on such an inconvenient form? That's right, you understand it now, yes? It's a handicap. It's just right for dealing with human opponents.

Thanks to stumbling down the stairs, I've gained a considerable distance from the man with the pipe. I continue running down the dim hallway. Then I detect the figures of people up ahead. Civilians?!

I can't drag them into this! "What are you doing?! I have this place covered! You two get out of here fast!" I'm thinking of saying.

However, the two figures seem strangely flustered. I can't see them well since I'm running, but one of them appears to be unconscious. He's slumped over the other one, limp and motionless. Wait a minute, could it be… he's dead? No, probably not, but if he is, could it be that the two of them were already assailed by the pipe-wielding man…?

Newspaper articles with titles like "The Mysterious Death Incident at the Abandoned Building" and "Jet Black Wings, Unconscious and in Critical Condition" flash through my mind. Could it be that this is truly dangerous…?

I have a policy of not getting involved in typical cases and leaving them to the police, so it really is the best plan to escape. Being dragged into a trivial incident and exposing my identity to the organization—it's a common plot in manga and such. Being the intelligent person that I am, I will avoid that. Following the fleeing pair, I swiftly leap out of the abandoned building.

The setting sun burns with a fiery red, resembling the blazing eyes of the hellhound Cerberus, as if guiding me.

That's right, I run. I run with unwavering determination, for I am the Jet-Black Wings.

I follow the radiant glow of the setting sun that leads me out of the depths of darkness…

———————◆———————

Kuboyasu Aren's perspective

My name is Kuboyasu Aren. I'm a former delinquent.

I'm the former boss of the "ESPERS," a biker gang which is well known in Ibaraki Prefecture.

Due to the influence of my parents who were also former delinquents, I grew up as a delinquent, dying my hair and growing out a mullet. However, when I got the chance to transfer, I quit being a delinquent and decided to live as an honest man from then on.

There are many reasons why I chose to quit. One reason was that I became tired of the daily routine filled with fights and violence. Another reason is that I got sick of stepping on my own mullet every day. Anyway, I started to think that I wanted to change my current lifestyle and that it was high time to cut my excessively long hair.

As a result, at the new school I transferred to, I dyed my hair back to black and adjusted my clothing to be inconspicuous in order to blend in. To look a little more diligent, I started wearing glasses as well. The glasses also help to hide my naturally intimidating gaze. Surprisingly, it seems that ordinary people don't start fighting just because their eyes meet.

If my old gang members saw me now, there's no doubt that they would be shocked. But no matter what anybody says, I'll show change. I'll study and show that I live seriously. Because from the moment I transferred, I vowed in my heart that I would become an upstanding citizen.

That's right, that is my vow…

"Here it is…"

Right now, I'm standing in front of an abandoned building on the outskirts of town.

It's an eerie place. No matter how you look at it, it's not the kind of place that an upstanding citizen would get close to. It'd obviously be way better to just go home and study for the classes I have trouble understanding, but here I am standing in front of the abandoned building.

Why am I standing in a place like this…?

It happened during break time.

Feeling bored and with nothing to do, I was casually wandering through the corridors.

Then, by chance, I overheard some girls whispering in fear, saying, "There's a 'dangerous' abandoned building on the outskirts of town." That was a mistake on my part.

Upon hearing about this "dangerous" abandoned building, my instincts started tingling and I couldn't resist…

The abandoned building is being illuminated by the setting sun, creating an uneasy atmosphere. There's no doubt that this is a gathering spot for local delinquents. It seemed like the perfect place for those who had no place to belong, neither at home nor at school.

I circle around the perimeter of the building and find an emergency staircase.

Damn it, what the hell am I doing…?

Despite my conflicted feelings, I proceed to take the rusty staircase, carefully testing each step to ensure its stability. It seems my ingrained nature doesn't change that easily. I find a window with a broken lock and enter the building.

Even though I had made a vow to live seriously, I can't help getting excited. Am I still subconsciously wishing for delinquent-like things? Am I still seeking a delinquent-like atmosphere?

No, that's not it.

Around here is a route that people use for going to school. The girls were also frightened, weren't they? I'm just here to confirm there's no danger in this building. That's all. If, by any chance, this location does happen to be a gathering spot for delinquents, it would be in the best interest of the neighborhood's safety to report it to the police, just like any honest person would do.

That's right. Even though this building seems like the type of place delinquents would be drawn to, there's probably actually no one inside. I'm

simply acting as a responsible citizen, considering the safety of the neighborhood.

But, just in case…

"There…"

I pick up a steel pipe that catches my eye. It fits perfectly in my hand, and the familiar sensation brings back memories. However, I'm only doing this as a precaution. I'm not thinking about using it to smash open the heads of those scoundrels or anything like that. Yes, it's for self-defense. Justifiable self-defense.

With a swift motion, I swing the metal pipe downward. As it hits the floor, a metallic "clang" echoes through the building. Instinctively, I flinch and tense up.

And then…

"Huh?!"

I look around. Suddenly, I heard what seemed to be a human voice. Gripping the metal pipe tightly, I slowly moved towards the direction of the sound. Was it just my imagination? No, I definitely heard something. It's better to be cautious.

Advancing quietly in the dim hallway, I make sure not to make any noise. I carefully check each room one by one, but they're all empty. As I approach the next room, I start to think that it was just my imagination, but then "it" appears. The sight leaves me wide-eyed in astonishment.

In front of me, by a window through which the setting sun's light is filtering, stands a man dressed in a black cloak.

Who the hell is that guy?!

Confused, I quickly hide out of view. In the room where the man is standing, there's a poster with incomprehensible, spell-like symbols I don't really understand, as well as candles. And by his feet, there's some kind of drawn magic circle, as if he's intending to perform some kind of ritual.

This guy is bad news…!

In front of this bizarre scene, completely different from the delinquent gathering spot I'd imagined, I break out into a cold sweat. This is an

unpleasant feeling that I've never experienced before. I, who have been involved in numerous violent conflicts, am now overwhelmed at the mere sight of this figure…

I can't underestimate him… Just what is this guy?

I discreetly observe the room. The man in black is completely motionless. He gives off an eerie vibe. Suddenly, I notice a weird mark on the wall. Black wings, and is that a snake? I read the English words written along the mark in my mind.

Da… daruku… No, "dark," is it…?

Lately, due to diligently paying attention in class, I have no trouble reading and understanding English. I see, it's likely the mark of a group… Well, isn't this a stylish design? It's quite impressive that it can stir the soul of someone like me, a former delinquent. It wouldn't be surprising if the members of their group have this tattoo somewhere on their bodies as a symbol. Yes, that must be the kind of mark it is.

However, something doesn't sit right… Once more, I stare at the mark with "dark" written on it.

Ah! Could it be…!

At that moment, a word flashes through my mind.

"Dark Reunion."

That's the name of an unidentified and notorious gang that Kaidou, who strangely knew a lot about Ibaraki's gang scene, once mentioned…! Could it be that this is the gathering spot for the gang that Shun mentioned? But this eerie mark, there's no mistaking it…! If that's the case, then that man must be a member of the gang, and his black attire could be his tokkofuku.

(TL Note: "Tokkofuku" is the long jacket worn by biker gang members.)

But why is he alone in this dimly lit place? Could he be involved in some shady deal, perhaps trading dangerous goods…?

No, wait a minute…

If he's writing in English, then there's also a possibility that he's in some kind of international organization. I should give that possibility fair consideration as well. Heh, maybe it's because I've been taking my classes

seriously lately, but I'm surprisingly sharp today. However, if this is the case then that's awful. It might not just be a local gang; they could be an internationally operating crime ring.

This is bad… This "dangerous" building seems to be even worse than I imagined…!

Still holding the steel pipe, I stand unmoving in that spot. My palms are getting sweaty.

What should I do? I ask myself. Right now the man is alone. What's more, his back is turned and vulnerable. And I have a weapon. Should I go ahead…?

But—

"Sigh… good grief… Do you plan to keep hiding?" the man in black says calmly.

"Kukuku… Come on out… I know you're there," the man in black continues with a disinterested air, not turning around.

What… was that…?!

My heart thumps rapidly. How did he know? I almost let out a startled cry but quickly stifle it. But I'm truly starting to panic.

"Your killing-aura is leaking out, huh? Hah, what an amateur…"

The man speaks calmly without taking a single look at me.

From when I was little I spent my days doing nothing but fighting. There were guys who were taller than me, had stronger builds than me, and were skilled in martial arts. But no matter what kind of opponent I had, I never lost. There were even groups who had weapons and attacked under the cover of night. But even to them, I didn't lose. I knocked them all down with these very fists.

However… This is the first time in my life that I've met someone who said something about "killing-aura leaking out." In fact, in real fights, there's hardly ever a moment where you use such exaggerated lines like something out of a manga.

Is this guy… a pro…?

The man in front of me is definitely a person from the underworld. He's completely different from delinquents and thugs. His appearance matches his demeanor, someone who thrives in darkness and lives in the shadows. He's a truly powerful person.

"To be honest, I knew you were there from the beginning… kukuku… but I purposefully tolerated your presence. Do you understand why, scum?"

This is terrible… I know in my head that I should run away, but my body won't listen to me. My blood is starting to boil! Despite the danger, I find myself enveloped in a strange exhilaration. Before I realize it, I'm wearing a smile on my face.

I take off my glasses and sweep my hair back. Preparations complete.

Very well… Bring it on!

Raising the steel pipe, I rush out of hiding.

"Yes, it was a 'trap'… to consign you to oblivion with my own hands!" the man in black declares, and in the next instant, a gun appears right before my eyes.

"Wha—?!"

A gun…?! Oh god, am I dead? To be honest, this was unexpected. I'm shocked by the extent of my foolishness in believing he was unarmed. No, it's no wonder. So the purpose of that cloak was to conceal weapons, huh? Seems like this really is a group I should've never gotten involved with. If that person so much as moves a finger, my life will be blown away in the blink of an eye. However, I also have my own pride, having gone through my fair share of battles and challenges.

I, the former leader of the "ESPERS" and renowned as the "Mullet-wearing Aren" in my hometown, will not give up my life that easily. After all, a gun is simply a matter of hitting or missing—it's a binary outcome. If it doesn't hit, then there's no problem. It's that simple. No need to overcomplicate things. "He shoots. I dodge. I hit him." That's all there is to it.

Heh, this is nothing. I can handle this with ease. Or maybe it's even better to go with "Strike him before he shoots." Yeah, that works too. Alright, I won't die. It's you, you black-clad bastard, who will meet your end!

In a split-second, my mind rapidly processed the situation.

The moment the gun is pointed at me, I swing down the steel pipe without any hesitation and with all my strength.

“I’ll slaughter you! Oraaa!!”

“Skreee!!”

The man lets out an otherworldly cry, and evades my iron pipe with movements that are beyond human. What is this movement?! This guy is insane… His gang probably consists of individuals who simply enjoy fighting or even killing each other… Damn it! Just as I was trying to live as a good person, I encounter such a twisted bastard!

However, the man in black suddenly turns his back to me and starts running. What? Why didn’t he shoot? For a moment, I hesitate at his inexplicable actions. Meanwhile, he runs into the darkness with his back turned to me. This guy is without a doubt a pro. His unwavering movements contrast my own confusion. What is his aim? Is this also a trap? Or is he heading towards his comrades? Regardless, I can’t let him escape here! So right here, right now, I will crush him!

SKREEE!!

“Wait, you bastard! I’ll turn you into minced meat!”

Swinging the steel pipe around, I pursue the man in black.

With a guy as dangerous as this, who’s wielding a gun, there’s no way I can turn a blind eye to him. So instead of staying hidden, I’m going to end this with my own hands!

Staying vigilant of my surroundings, I chase the man. He isn’t particularly fast on his feet, but his movements seem deliberately artificial. It’s like he’s leading me along. Is he playing with me? Holding back my anger, I carefully continue my pursuit. I can’t afford to overlook any potential ambush or hidden traps.

The man in black quickly moves down the stairs, and I hurriedly follow suit. Damn it, don’t panic. He’s deliberately playing with my sense of urgency, continuously alternating his speed. Even my own impatience is part of his calculated plan. He intends to lure me into a trap. He’s underestimating me…!

As I continue running through the dim hallway, I see two figures ahead of the man in black. So this bastard had been joining up with his buddies after all… They’re going to gang up on me, three-against-one, huh?

But I’ve gotten through a twelve-against-one battle unscathed before. Hand-to-hand combat is my forte. However, to be honest, I don’t really feel like getting into another melee. That’s because—

“I can’t hold back anymoreee!!”

No longer considering the potential outcomes, I raise a war cry and charge towards the trio. It’s a suicidal maneuver, they have guns after all. However, society is at stake, and even if I go a bit too far, there’s a chance I’ll be forgiven… I hope. Although, considering that they’re part of the underworld, they can’t afford this to become public knowledge either. It’s actually they who would face trouble if the public were to learn of this.

Well, isn’t that convenient? That’ll make things easier for me.

Time to go wild. Let the “trash cleanup” begin!

However, just as I get filled with enthusiasm, for some reason the three of them start running away like mad. I’m left behind bewildered.

“What’s going on…? Is this also… a trap?”

They have guns. They outnumber me. But despite that, why are they still running away? I can't understand why. As I chase after them, I consider all the possibilities.

The three of them rush out of the abandoned building. I also burst out, chasing them. "Even if I can just get the black-clad man in front of me…" I think as I continue running. However—

"What?!"

The evening sun is blindingly bright, causing me to instinctively close my eyes and turn away. When I open my eyes again, the trio has already vanished. I quickly search the surrounding alleys, but there is no trace of them.

"You bastards! Where the hell did you go?!"

I've completely lost them. Clicking my tongue, I toss the steel pipe in a nearby garbage bin, and then hang my head. In the end, I didn't even catch a glimpse of their faces.

Wait, I see…

Those guys were undoubtedly involved in some kind of shady deal at that location. When I barged in, they concealed their identities and escaped. However, they couldn't afford to waste their time on just some high school student when they're an international criminal organization. That's why they disappeared before I could see their faces. That would explain everything. But then, what about that gun…?

Does that mean they never intended to shoot from the beginning…?

They never took me seriously from the start. It was just a little intimidating. Just to ridicule me.

"Damn it, they underestimated me!"

The sun has set. After a short walk from the abandoned building, I reach the city, which is filled with liveliness. Housewives returning from shopping, kids running around, students hanging around, office workers on their way home… It's the same as usual. Everyone is living the same as usual.

“Dark Reunion.” An underground organization lurking in this seemingly peaceful town. I won’t let them do as they please. Someday, they’ll regret underestimating me…

I put on my glasses and tidy my hair and clothes.

With that, I blend inside the crowd—into the same peace as always.

Once again, I suppress my anger and return to a state of normalcy.

———◆———

Saiki Kusuo’s perspective

My name is Saiki Kusuo. I’m a psychic.

For no particular reason, I came to check out an abandoned building on the outskirts of town, which had become notorious as a haunted spot (What do you mean “coffee blancmange?” I don’t know what you’re talking about). There I found the chihuahua guardian spirit of Kaidou, who appears to be the source of the ghostly phenomena. In order to return this lost spirit to its owner, I astral-projected and left my body.

I found myself subjected to the endless spectacle of Kuboyasu swinging a steel pipe with a demonic expression, the all-black-wearing Kaidou wielding a model gun, and that self-proclaimed spirit medium… whose name I can’t remember. Anyway, I was forced to witness the antics of these three individuals.

From the moment we arrived at the abandoned building, I was aware of Kaidou’s presence inside. It didn’t require mind-reading to realize it, after all; his loud laughter reverberated through the entire place. However, it seemed that Toritsuka, occupied with dealing with the barking chihuahua, was completely oblivious to it. Though, I never expected Kuboyasu to show up with an iron pipe.

As a result, what was supposed to be a simple task of returning a lost dog to its owner devolved into a chaotic scenario where I, in my astral form, pursued Kaidou, who was running from Kuboyasu, while Toritsuka and my body were also being chased.

When I approached to return the chihuahua, Kaidou suddenly turned around, yelling “skreee!” and started running. I must admit, I was taken aback.

Nevertheless, despite the nonsensical circumstances, I'm truly grateful that Toritsuka carried my body and fled. It would have been even more troublesome if Kaidou or Kuboyasu had witnessed my soulless body, in other words, my corpse. It was a surprisingly wise decision on Toritsuka's part.

Moreover, if he had left me alone in that place, I would have had to go and relocate Toritsuka to an abandoned island or some other remote spot. So I'm really grateful, okay, Toritsuka?

"Ah, Saiki-san, aren't you late?! It's been terrible!"

After I returned the chihuahua to Kaidou and set foot on the grassy area beside the abandoned building, Toritsuka rushes over to me.

"Actually, after you left, it got all chaotic and *kdsjghsivsgsdDKSUGVKDSNVSDVS!*"

Yes, I witnessed it all, and I think it's tiring for readers to hear the same thing over and over again, so let's skip this dialogue using my psychic powers.

But still, guardian spirits are truly amazing, aren't they?

Right at the moment when I returned the chihuahua to Kaidou, Kuboyasu, who was chasing after him, was forced to shut his eyes due to the dazzling sunset. As a result, Kaidou was able to escape safely. As you'd expect from a guardian spirit. Even though it's just a chihuahua, it really protects the person it's assigned to. Good grief, I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't gone to return it…

And Toritsuka, it's such a shame that you don't have a guardian spirit like that. I suppose that's why you're always so unfortunate… Feeling sorry for him, I look at Toritsuka with an understanding gaze.

"Hey, what do you mean 'that's why?!' I'm not unfortunate at all! Didn't I tell you earlier?! I'm a spirit medium, so I'm fine even without a guardian spirit! Ah, but, since this building is dangerous, I'm not going to come here anymore…"

Toritsuka's expression clouds as he says this. After going through this, anyone would react the same.

"This place is hell… I never want to go through such a terrifying experience again…"

He witnessed the battle between the “Jet-Black Wings” and the “Mullet-wearing Aren.” Anyone would feel this way. Honestly, I wish I could erase the memory of this ridiculously irrelevant battle too.

“It’s just one of those days where everything seems to go against me…”

Still, not being unfortunate doesn’t equate to having good fortune either. Maybe one of the reasons why you’re always treated like that within the story is because you’re not protected by a guardian spirit. Oh, by the way, are you okay with the fact that people have been seeing you talk to a wall this whole time?

Yes, I’m still in my astral form, so to an outsider, it would appear as if Toritsuka is talking to the wall of an abandoned building about his troubles and spirit medium powers. Even now Toritsuka is unaware that a parent and child are walking past briskly in order to avoid us.

Sometimes though, it’s better for humans to remain oblivious to certain matters. If they can continue living without knowing certain things, then isn’t that acceptable? For the time being, it’s probably best to not reveal the true identities of the black-clad gun wielder and the pipe-wielding delinquent. It wouldn’t make any difference if I told Toritsuka anyway.

Well then, let’s return to my physical body.

I wake up instantly, my eyes fluttering open. I sit up in the grassy area beside the abandoned building. After floating around for a while, there’s always this strange fuzzy feeling after returning.

Good grief, seriously, I was dragged into such a weird farce.

As I brush off the dirt from my uniform and stand up, Toritsuka exclaims with excitement, “Oh, Saiki-san, look! There are tons of porn mags dumped here!”

Ah, yeah… I’m not quite sure how to respond to that.

“This place is incredible! It’s a treasure trove! It’s a paradise of adult magazines!” Toritsuka exclaims, gathering the large pile of magazines scattered in the grass.

“Finding this here is such a stroke of luck! It’s insane! It’s like heaven!”

Well, I suppose that’s good for him. Is that what I should say?

But then—

“Ugh, it’s Creepytsuka! Seriously, this is the worst.”

“Huh? It really is Creepytsuka. That guy’s totally unbelievable.”

Abruptly, I hear voices. When I look, there are a few high school girls in a group, making a commotion.

It seems like they are Toritsuka’s classmates from the same year. It appears they came to check out the rumored haunted spot. While silently watching Toritsuka, who stood frozen while holding a stack of magazines, I quietly turned invisible. Why, you ask?

“I mean, why is he holding so many dirty magazines in a place like this?”

“Seriously, this is unbelievable. It’s more horrifying than a haunted spot.”

I don’t want to be seen together with a guy like this.

Toritsuka, looking up at the sky as if giving up, mutters, “I told you, Saiki-san… I wanted to redeem myself…”

Hey, don’t address me.

“I told you that I wanted to show the girls in my class something good and redeem myself…”

What the heck did you do in class? To call you “Creepytsuka,” they must really hate you.

“I mean, seriously, why is he even here? It would be better if he just died…”

To that extent?! Honestly, what did you do? Sexual harassment again?

“What do you mean ‘again?!’ Stop it!”

Don’t talk to me.

“Hey, that’s just cruel! I didn’t do anything! I swear, I didn’t!”

Good grief. I’m going to say this for your sake, Toritsuka. Think about it, if you keep addressing me while I’m invisible, how do you think you’ll appear to all these girls?

After staring at me for a short while, Toritsuka becomes shocked.

“Why did you become invisible?!”

Please understand. I don’t want them to think we’re friends.

In the meantime, Toritsuka’s female classmates, clearly disgusted by his sight of talking to nothingness, hurriedly walked away.

Realizing this, Toritsuka frantically begins chasing after them.

“W-Wait! A-Actually, in this haunted spot, there’s a ghost of a dog, a—”

While saying that, Toritsuka, in his haste, trips over his own feet and, with a scream of “chihuahua!,” spills the treasure trove of magazines he was holding in his hands. The large quantity of magazines fly through the air, and upon scattering over the surrounding area, screams fill the air.

“Ahhh! What the hell is wrong with this guy?!”

“Seriously unbelievable! Disgusting! Pervert!”

Toritsuka gets bombarded with insults like “disgusting!” and “degenerate!” Having lost the opportunity to explain himself, he can only watch dumbfounded as his classmates leave. Seeing his figure from behind, I do feel a little pity towards him. Nendou senior, protect him once in a while, won’t you.

In front of me, a rather grim sight unfolded as Toritsuka silently picked up and collected the scattered treasure trove of magazines.

“Saiki-san…” Toritsuka says quietly, his back turned. “To be called ‘pervert!’ and shouted at by a girl familiar to me is surprisingly arousing…!”

Wow, he really is Creepytsuka.

Honestly, there’s nothing worse than a needlessly positive pervert. Watching Toritsuka with a faint smile on his face as he gathered the magazines, I recalled a certain phrase.

The truly scary thing is the people.

I don’t remember when I heard it or who said it, but it really is the truth.

The true horror does not lie in “haunted spots,” but in chapters about Toritsuka.

———————◆———————

Now, let’s talk about what happened the next day, or rather, a resolution of sorts.

It’s break time. As always, I’m sitting at my desk in the classroom, reading a novel, when some gossip falls upon my ears.

“Hey, did you know? There’s a popular urban legend going around.”

“Ooh, tell me!”

Casually, I listen in, thinking it might be related to yesterday. The rumor had spread from Toritsuka’s class to our class. Girls sure love this talk, huh.

“I heard that if you meet your doppelganger, you’ll die!”

That’s a completely different rumor. I didn’t expect that. Girls really do love this kind of talk.

“You will die? Why? I don’t get it.”

However, it seems this rumor isn’t gaining much traction.

“Oh, then how about this one? It’s about an abandoned building on the outskirts of town.”

Perhaps this time it’s related to where we went yesterday.

“That building used to be a hideout for an international criminal organization. But now, it’s inhabited by a mysterious figure in a black cloak, wielding an iron pipe and surrounded by dirty magazines. They say it targets loud girls and chihuahua’s as sacrifices for summoning demons!”

“What the heck?! That’s so vague. That’s terrifying!”

The girls who were listening to the story shriek. Good grief, it’s become a chaotic mess with so many embellishments. Rumors really are unreliable.

“Hey, stop it with the creepy stories. I have to pass by that way to get home!”

Listening to my classmates' conversation, I let out a sigh.

Toritsuka, Kaidou, Kuboyasu, you guys have finally become urban legends.

Interlude With a Guest 1: That Person Over There

Every autumn, the PK Festival takes place at our school. Apparently this year marked the 31st time. However, the number of visitors seems to be different from usual.

This is something I found out later, of course, but apparently they've kept track of the number of visitors in the past.

Usual visitors to the festival include the students' relatives, as well as neighbors who live close by, and even students from other schools. The festival takes place from Saturday to Sunday. However, when compared to other years' festivals, ours apparently had a higher number of visitors than was expected.

We enjoyed great weather this year, and our festival's schedule didn't collide with events from any other school. These perfect conditions were part of the reason why we received so many visitors, but they weren't the most important.

In reality, a particular rumor had been spreading online about this year's PK Festival. It was just a single line of text, but that very line was the main reason our number of visitors increased considerably. And what that text read was the following:

"I heard Aoki Kanata will be visiting PK Festival."

Aoki Kanata is the protagonist in *"Shinseiki Idol Densetsu: Kanata Seven Change,"* and he's a handsome and popular idol. However, his true dream is one day becoming a famous comedian, and he's willing to do all sorts of ridiculous stunts to get some laughs. Of course, this is only known by himself, espers, his manager, and our readers.

I'm sure many Aoki Kanata fans would be greatly disappointed if they found out their favorite singing and dancing idol in fact wants to be known as the filthiest comedic idol.

They're better off not knowing anything about his real personality.

However, those same fans are also incredibly stubborn, believing a completely random text online without a source, and hanging onto it for dear life. I must admit I was slightly surprised by that.

But they'll still hold onto that text even if it turned out to be a fake rumor, and so plenty of Aoki Kanata's female fans ended up visiting PK Festival.

That unverifiable rumor about the festival spread like wildfire.

I was walking around the first floor with Nendou, Kaidou and Kuboyasu. Everything from the classroom doors, the walls, ceilings and even the lamp posts was decorated, and the entire school had a festive aura. There were signs inviting visitors to each class's unique activity.

By the way, my class did a plain and boring exhibition of the best rocks we could find in the school garden.

Or I guess you could say I had them do that with my psychic powers. Members of any club or the student council will have to go there and help during the school festival, which means that students with no extracurricular activities like me will be forced to take care of everything if we'd done a stand or a shop. With an exhibition, all we have to do is take turns to stay in the classroom and watch.

That's why I'm able to do basically anything I want during the school festival. That being said, all that freedom is only good for visiting other high school students' activities anyway. Buying something to eat or to drink would end up being too expensive, and idling around any other expositions will get quite boring in no time. To be honest, I would much rather spend these two days at home eating coffee jelly and watching some movies or something, but if I did that, I'm sure my fellow students A (Nendou) and B (Kaidou) would start throwing a ruckus about not being able to find me anywhere. That's why the only thing I can really do is walk around the school festival with no particular purpose in mind.

I sigh quietly.

Even if I try to look around for something interesting, there really is nothing that catches my attention.

A haunted mansion, a café, baseball, a haunted mansion, a café, a haunted mansion, a café, a haunted mansion, a haunted mansion, a haunted mansion… it's all cafés and haunted mansions?!

Why are they all clumped together on the same floor? The student council should've planned out the festival's layout a bit better. Look, there's even a haunted mansion café right there. Knowing all floors might be the same thing makes me want to go home. If only there were at least a coffee jelly shop or something…

I hear a group of high school girls talking as they walk past me as I'm still thinking about the coffee jelly.

"So it was a fake rumor in the end?"

"Ah, this sucks! Why didn't he come?"

It seems like they're from a different school, based on their uniform. Several of them keep walking together. I'm guessing they're Aoki Kanata fans that came here because of all the rumors circulating online.

"And here I was excited that maybe he was going to appear on stage or something…"

"But there's only this terrible band playing. This sucks…"

"I heard they suddenly started playing better at the end, though."

I see. So they thought Aoki Kanata was going to make a surprise guest appearance at the end of the performance and that's why they came here. I guess it's true that there are several performances planned for today with the light music club, the traditional music club and the ballad club performing on the outdoor stage, as well as the trivia contest and the bingo event planned inside the gymnasium, but there's still no way such a big idol would perform here in the first place.

You really think our school has a huge budget for something like that? I could see us at best getting a contestant from a popular reality show or something.

Besides, even if we somehow had the budget, I really don't think a popular idol like him would take time off his schedule to visit a random high school's culture festival. And even if he somehow wanted to visit the festival undercover during his off time, I doubt his managers would just let him show up like that.

"Ugh… I'm getting sick of all the haunted mansions."

"I know, right? Wanna leave? Doesn't seem like there's anything fun to do around here."

They said this while staring at the entrance to one of the several haunted mansions, where an off-duty student dressed as a ghost was laughing and joking around loudly with his other classmates while eating takoyaki.

You shouldn't be laughing and acting all giddy in front of your potential customers while you're still dressed as a ghost!

However, this sight is not out of the ordinary.

I've seen countless students taking it easy, or doing completely mundane tasks around school. And it's not only the ghosts, I've also seen students in maid uniforms or anime cosplays. Not just in front of their classroom, but also going to buy something to eat, or simply walking around without taking off their costumes. This is exactly one of the reasons why I wanted our class to do an exhibition and not an activity or a stand.

I wanted to avoid having to dress up in a sloppy costume and walk around school.

Take, for example, this student that just walked past me. He was wearing a flashy wig and some cutesy maid dress with frills. He's supposed to be pretending to be a female maid, but he's wearing no makeup at all, and his costume looks cheap. With that kind of effort, he's no more than a regular high school boy with a cheerleader's pom poms on top of his head. Walking around school looking like that is just not for me.

At the very least, he seems to be having a lot of fun, and the customers' reactions around him are also quite good. That's the silver lining. Otherwise, it would be a truly miserable display.

I guess that's what you'd call the other male student that's currently walking down the hallway…

He's wearing a pro-wrestler mask, a ballet tutu with a swan head that pops out of his crotch, and a shirt with sloppily cut holes around his nipples.

All the high school girls let out tiny shrieks as they see him walk by, and they pull others out of his way.

"Wh-What's that…?"

You could see several high school girls trembling.

"Le-Let's go home…"

"Yeah, you're right… Besides, that weirdo showed up and everything…"

"I'm sure it's just some kind of costume, anyway…"

And so the high school girls start leaving the festival.

“Aw… and we didn’t even get to see Aoki Kanata.”

Several of them were muttering as they walked away.

Good grief, you people really say the strangest things. You just walked past Aoki Kanata himself a moment ago.

Though I have to admit I was quite taken aback myself. I never imagined all those rumors circulating online would turn out to be true.

I turn around, my gaze lingers on Aoki Kanata’s figure in disguise as he walks past me.

Chapter 2 The Disastrous Life of Teruhashi Kokomi

My name is Saiki Kusuo. I'm an esper. Although I introduced myself around 10 pages earlier, allow me to repeat myself, in case you're one of those people that skipped the first chapter for some reason.

Well then, what did you think about Toritsuka's first chapter? Was it as bad as you expected? That's good to hear. Well, it was no laughing matter for me… There was a high chance that you would shut the book immediately after realizing that Toritsuka would be the one talking. So thank you for getting this far.

I've been able to hear all of our readers' thoughts on Toritsuka's chapter thanks to my telepathic skills, but if I had to summarize the most common opinions, it would be something like:

"A Toritsuka chapter…? Why are they doing something so risky…?"

"Did they forget the tragedy that was Chapter 30 in the manga?! They must be out of their minds!"

"I don't care if it's a novelization, I don't think there was any need to make a bet so unfavorable!"

I've been hearing voices following that same train of thought for a while, but don't worry, I completely agree.

Not to turn this into an ad, but I want you guys to think back to the first volume of our novel. If you have it readily at hand, I would appreciate it if you could open it up and check the beginning.

Do you remember what the first chapter of our first novel was?

It was titled: "Try to guess the ESP cards!"

It was an average first chapter for a novel, where we introduced several of my classmates as characters, but there was also something in particular I'd like you to pay attention to. In this chapter, the most featured character wasn't Nendou, Kaidou or Hairo, but it was Takahashi. Did you notice? We even added an illustration of him on the chapter's title page and everything. Saying the first chapter was Takahashi's chapter wouldn't even be a stretch. In other words…

Our first chapter was dedicated to an extra. Our first chapter was about Takahashi. Takahashi of all people.

And that's what our first introduction to novelization was…

Oh, I think some of our readers are starting to catch on to what I'm trying to say.

Speaking about this volume's first chapter:

We started off talking about spiritual powers and mediums. Our first chapter was about Toritsuka. Toritsuka of all people.

That's how we decided to start our second volume, the one you're reading right now.

How dare we do something like this? What kind of challenge were we trying to accomplish?

Did we throw a die with the faces of all characters on it, or some other similar stunt straight out of a TV variety show?

And then as luck would have it we ended up in this complicated situation?

Of course, it was nothing like that. This was all written with completely serious intent. In which case, my best guess would be… that the person writing this novelization is completely out of his mind. That's my only theory.

I've never heard of a novelization where the own protagonist has to take the reins because of so much incompetence. I guess you could say that I care more than most other people due to my telepathy, and picking up others' thoughts, even when I don't really want to.

For instance, right now I can pick up the thoughts of everyone inside the classroom, and it's a bother. And it's not just because is Kaidou fantasizing about "Eiwaz-ing" or "Rasterizing" or "novelizing" or whatever. That's just business as usual. But this time is different.

(Saiki Kunio… Coffee Jelly…)

That's Teruhashi-san's inner voice, who has been thinking about me and coffee jelly with a somber expression on her face for a while. It's unusual for Teruhashi to doze off in the middle of class like this.

However, Teruhashi isn't her usual self right now, and although that has absolutely nothing to do with me, and I normally wouldn't worry about someone having mundane thoughts like these, this time is different.

I listen to hundreds of different thoughts all day, every day, and I generally make an unconscious effort and manage to ignore most of them. But whenever I hear my own name, for some reason, it immediately catches my attention. Even if I misheard someone and they weren't thinking about me at all.

I think everyone has experienced hearing their own name in a crowded place and immediately turning their heads to see what's going on. The only difference is I can do that telepathically.

That's why I get pretty uneasy whenever I hear someone thinking about me.

Besides, why was Teruhashi-san thinking about coffee jelly as well in the first place? I can't just tell myself to ignore it. There's nothing I can do about feeling curious.

(Saiki Kunio… maybe he would say "oh!" to me with coffee jelly…?)

What was that? I feel like I just heard a very unsettling thought…

I'll try focusing specifically on her. Since we're in the classroom, I can hear all my classmates' different thoughts, and it's pretty noisy. I won't be able to hear if I don't focus.

(If only I had coffee jelly ***[Mwahahaha! This is the mark of darkness!]*** *Kunio would* ***[Gaze upon it!]****)*

Kaidou's thoughts are in the way. This is turning into a weird collaborative experiment.

Geez, if only I could get Kaidou to shut up for a second. Well, I guess he *is* sitting quietly in class, but his mental delusions are always so loud…

Listening to a particular person's thoughts when I'm walking around town, or even while I'm in class can get very difficult with everyone else's thoughts echoing at the same time.

But I think I've figured out more or less what Teruhashi is thinking.

Apparently Mera told Teruhashi-san that I frequently stop by our local store and order coffee jelly. Good grief, can't she mind her own business?

(I'll use the coffee jelly to make him go "oh!" for me!)

And now this is the result. I've started to realize what Teruhashi wants to do.

(I'll make you realize, Saiki Kunio… wait a second! Why am I, the very image of perfection, worrying so much about a secondary character like him?!)

Apparently, Teruhashi can't even grasp the possibility that a single human on Earth won't go *"oh!"* after just seeing her, considering she's widely accepted by others, as well as herself, as a perfect beautiful girl. Unfortunately for her, I have my own pride, which means I'm never going to say *"oh!"* to her, no matter what.

Catching the attention of someone who stands out as much as Teruhashi-san is incredibly dangerous for me, when I just want to live a quiet life as a secondary character. Which is why I refuse to go *"oh!"* I'm definitely not *oh!*-pen to that idea. Wait, what kind of English is this?

In any case, I know no matter what she's planning, it's not going to work out.

(But how do you prepare coffee jelly in the first place? I guess I need to get some beans first. And then the recipe…)

She's going to do it from scratch?! Or rather, she's planning that far ahead? Can you please spare me the anxiety? Just choose a simpler method. You could probably prepare some easily by buying some gelatin and instant coffee or something. Just do that. Actually, don't. Just don't prepare anything for me. I'm not going to say *"oh!"* no matter what you do, anyway.

(No… as a perfect girl, naturally I want to prepare the perfect coffee jelly, but at the same time, I can't put in so much effort that the poor boy gets the wrong impression…)

I'm not going to, so you don't have to worry about that. I'm not going to "get the wrong impression" or go *"oh!"* either.

(But how would I go about giving him the coffee jelly in a natural way…? Should I just say that I prepared too much, so I had to give it away? I have to make it clear that I didn't prepare it just for him, or he might get the wrong impression…)

So you're just a tsundere?

(Besides, if I ended up preparing some just for him, it could lead to a stealing frenzy, just like with valentine chocolates. It would be homemade coffee jelly that I prepared by myself, after all. I'm sure everyone would be at each other's throats just to get some.)

An image of me being attacked by several strong-looking men, getting my glasses broken, and collapsing unconscious on the floor, flashes through Teruhashi's mind.

(But still… even if I prepared more to avoid creating any conflict, I don't think it's realistic to think I could prepare enough. Even someone perfect like me can't create enough coffee jelly for all humanity, after all…)

Teruhashi's expression becomes gloomy. She seems to be completely out of options, which I'm perfectly fine with.

(What should I do? A single piece of my own homemade coffee jelly could start World War Three. Even trying to make more jelly for everyone could lead to an all-out global collapse…)

Aren't you exaggerating a little? By the way, an all-out global collapse just took place in Kaidou's imagination. And now "Black Wings" is wandering aimlessly around an abandoned wasteland.

Kaidou's delusion (his new work) is starting to get intense.

(Only the fittest can survive in this post-apocalyptic world. A manly guy with a mohawk starts attacking a group of survivors for their water, food, oil, and coffee jelly.)

Why are you thinking about coffee jelly as well?! What kind of world is that?

Good grief, I need to focus on Teruhashi-san's thoughts.

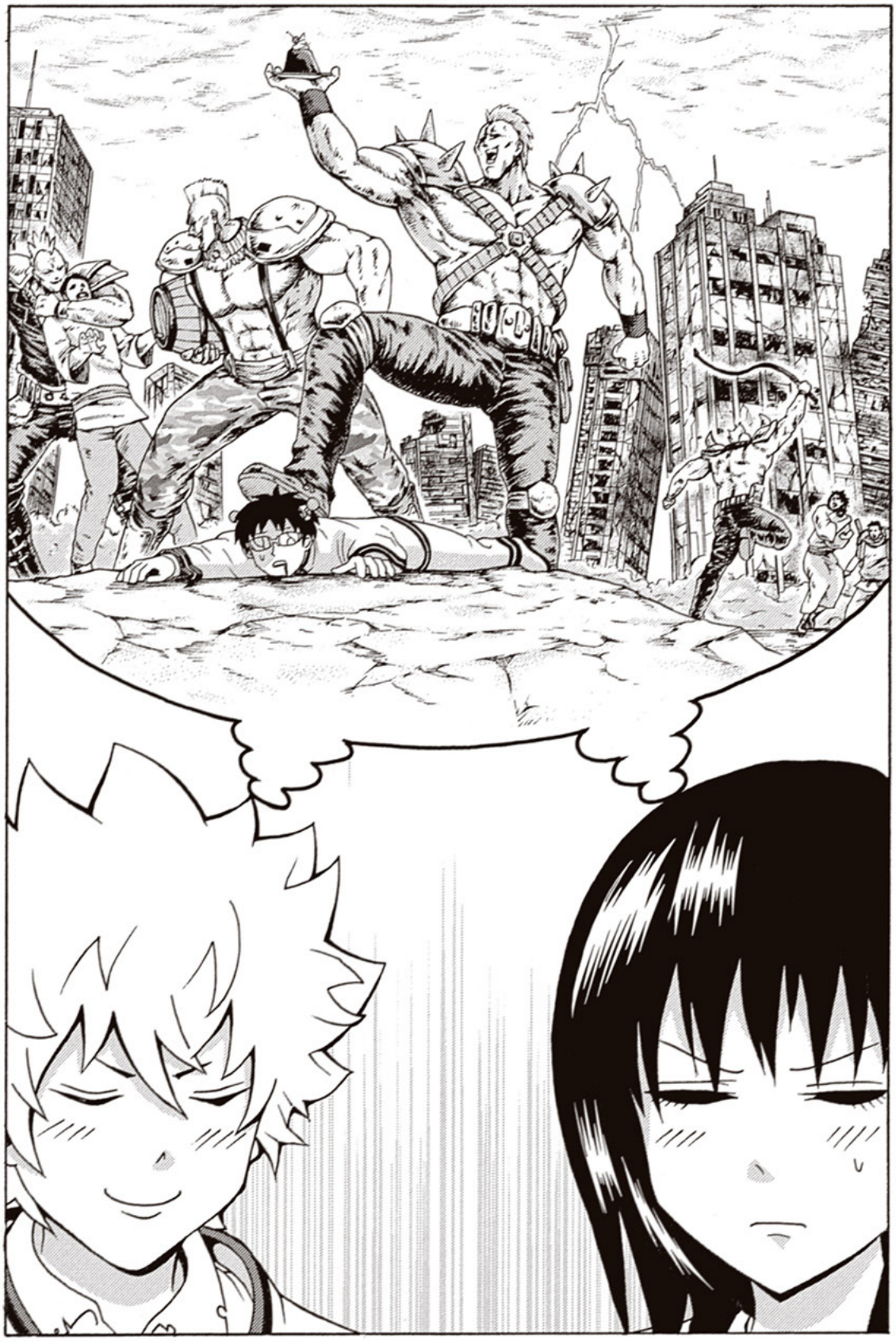
(What would happen if the world were to collapse, I wonder…? Well, I suppose a strong man with a mohawk would start attacking people in search of water, food, oil, and coffee jelly… Or something like that?)

Why are both of your delusions in sync?!

(Sigh… I can't think of anything. I'm at a loss. What should I do?)

Teruhashi-san starts wondering.

Just don’t prepare anything. Don’t give me anything. Just don’t. You can’t think of that option? I guess I won’t be involved in any troublesome developments if she doesn’t come up with anything, anyway…



(That's it!)

Wait… what?

I guess I can't say I'm surprised, though. She's pretty much blessed by the gods themselves.

(I just have to work part-time with Mera whenever Saiki stops by to buy coffee jelly! And it will be me of all people who brings it to him. Hee hee, this will make him say "oh!" for sure!)

A distorted image of me going *"oh!"* and then saying "Te-Teruhashi-san?! You're so beautiful I thought an angel had descended from heaven!" appears on Teruhashi's mind.

(That's right! If he won't say "oh!" normally, then I just have to go for a surprise attack "oh!")

So there's more than one type of *"oh!"* with her? I have to admit I'm a little surprised! It's rare to come across such a completely irrelevant fact.

(You better prepare yourself, Saiki Kunio… I'll make you go "oh!" with my surprise attack!)

She quickly glances at me, and laughs to herself. Sorry to tell you this, but I know exactly what your surprise is even before you've started preparing it.

Alright then, so what am I going to do about this?

I have a habit of visiting that store once a week to enjoy the best coffee and coffee jelly while reading a book or something. And it just so happens that today I was going to go there.

I take quick glances throughout the day at Teruhashi-san, who has looked quite pleased ever since she planned her "surprise," while thinking about what to do. Should I just go to the store as planned? Or maybe I should call it quits?

The same road, the same store, the same seat and the same coffee jelly as always.

Of course, logically speaking, it would be better for me to just not go today, considering that I was looking forward to enjoying the same as always.

This is all Teruhashi-san's fault, of course. I could very well find my expectations of normalcy completely betrayed by her surprise.

So what would happen if I didn't show up today?

I would manage to splendidly avoid the surprise that Teruhashi has carefully planned. And that would take care of her for today. But that's just today.

What about tomorrow?

What about the day after tomorrow?

I really don't think Teruhashi-san is going to give up just because I avoided her once. Worst case scenario, she'll keep working at that store until she manages to get her "surprise attack." Not to mention she may attempt something similar at school or on my way back home, and give herself any excuse to try to get her surprise *"oh!"* I can see how avoiding her time and time again could potentially just make things worse in the long run.

Besides, if I keep doing that, I won't be able to go back to the store for coffee jelly ever again.

Don't you think that's completely ridiculous? In that case, the answer is simple.

I have to do the same as always, get my coffee jelly like I always do, and just not say *"oh!"*

I cannot go *"oh!"* no matter what. This goes against my policy to avoid trouble, but at the same time, avoiding it this time could lead to further trouble eventually. And it's my plan to live life as normally as possible. Alright, let's get this surprise over with once and for all…

I keep thinking about that, as I walk down the same road as always and head for the shop, when suddenly…

What's… going on…?

I suddenly notice something strange.

There's a huge crowd of people in front of the store. The little cafe that would always sit quietly on the side of the road has suddenly become as crowded as a department store during a bargain sale. That's because

Teruhashi-san is there, of course. It's the only possible reason. But I never thought it would be this bad…

I use my clairvoyance to take a look, and I see Mera-san and the manager freaking out. Instead of jumping and screaming with joy, the manager is truly screaming and looking like he's about to cry.

I can't blame them. There would usually be some empty seats around this time. This isn't an hour that sees much traffic for cafes in general. There's no way so many customers would start crowding the place out of nowhere. Besides, this is truly a ridiculous amount of people. And for some reason the clients are all ordering coffee jelly. Every single table is getting coffee jelly. I just scratch my head in confusion. It's true that this shop's coffee jelly is the best in town, no doubt about that. But for every single person to order the exact same thing, one after another? That's abnormal. What's going on?

I decide to check up on Teruhashi-san, and figure out the reason immediately.

She's wearing a maid uniform and preparing the coffee jelly herself.

What a disaster… I'm at a loss. Usually it's Mera-san who wears the maid uniform, but apparently they decided to give it to Teruhashi-san, despite being a part-timer.

That's obvious. Teruhashi-san will stand out more and draw in more customers. They'll see her, go *"oh!"* and order the coffee jelly she's preparing.

I can't believe the single different variable today is Teruhashi-san, and moreover that she can draw in so many customers. I'm starting to wonder if her World War Three delusion was actually not an exaggeration.

Alright, guess I'll leave.

I turn around after taking a quick glance inside the shop.

I don't have enough courage to walk into a shop with so many *"oh!"* enthusiasts. Besides, I hate crowded places in the first place. Even if I did want to go in, there are so many people there that I can't even get close anymore.

As I turn around and begin walking away, I hear Teruhashi-san's inner voice.

(I can't believe working part-time at a regular shop is so demanding… I won't make it in time…)

She's starting to break a sweat as she moves on from one order to the next. Her pace begins to gradually slow down. However, a perfect girl like Teruhashi-san won't be discouraged by something like this.

(My arms are starting to get numb… but I have to give it my all until Saiki gets here. This is what I practiced at home for… It was all to make him go "oh!")

So she wants to make me say *"oh!…"* That's the sole reason that's driving Teruhashi-san to keep making coffee jelly beyond human limits. Good grief… Curse my telepathy for having such inconvenient timing.

I guess it can't be helped…!

(I can't take it… my arms are at their limit… wait… what?! What's going on?! I can prepare them much faster now?!)

Just as she was about to faint from exerting herself, suddenly Teruhashi-san's arms start moving at an incredible speed. Looking somewhat confused, she keeps preparing coffee jelly several times faster than she had been so far.

Just kidding, of course I assisted her with my psychic powers. I would feel bad if she ended up passing out from overexerting herself.

I assist her in the same manner as I did with Nendou during the ramen debacle, using my psychokinesis to elevate her speed and power. With this, she'll be able to keep working without feeling any exhaustion for a while.

(No way! My arms feel as light as feathers! Hah! I guess this is what it feels like to push beyond your limits. Just as expected of me!)

Yeah, let's just leave it at that.

Alright then, now what am I going to do about *this guy?*

There's a male shadowy figure hiding behind a telephone pole and observing me.

(I finally found you, you dirty four-eyes…! I'll keep observing you to make sure you don't get even a step closer to my Kokomi!)

I notice the presence behind me. Geez, this troublesome guy found me…

I wasn't expecting even her creepy older brother to show up. Couldn't they have gotten rid of him now that we're doing a new novelization? Besides, I'm starting to worry about this book's sales, considering we're doing two perverts in a row on our first two chapters.

Teruhashi's creepy older brother, Teruhashi Makoto, is a popular TV actor and idol who performs under the Mugami Toru pseudonym.

(Where do you think you're going, useless four-eyes? Did you think you could chase my Kokomi all the way here without getting caught?! I will be the only one who gets to marry Kokomi!)

This is his true personality.

He has an uncontrollable sister complex, and he wants to marry Teruhashi-san, despite being her real brother. No, this goes beyond a normal sister complex, this guy can only be described as a pervert.

(Were you hoping to see her? Hah! I was right to miss work today and come here instead!)

They should've fired you from your job already, then.

(Wait for me, Kokomi! Onii-chan is on his way! Ah! My beautiful Kokomi! Onii-chan is calling out to you in his thoughts! Kokomi, Kokomi, KOKOMI, Kokomiii!)

He might be wearing a hat, sunglasses and a face mask to hide his identity, but that's not going to fool me, since I can hear everything he's thinking. These can only be his thoughts.

(I was pretty lucky to notice Kokomi practicing her coffee jelly skills at home! Though it stings that she didn't want to tell me what it was for, even after pressing her about it. I wanted to think she was going to give me a surprise present, but I still prepared myself for the worst-case scenario… and that's when I found you, you damned four-eyes! You want to taste Kokomi's coffee jelly so badly that you're loitering around with that glint in your eyes while you wait for an opening?! How stupid! Your mouth doesn't deserve to taste Kokomi's handmade coffee jelly. It's a premium item that not even the highest quality ¥3000 coffee jelly can compete against! Know your place! The only one who deserves to eat Kokomi's handmade coffee jelly is me! Ha ha ha! What a shame, creepy loser!)

I'm starting to lose grasp of what "coffee jelly" even means after hearing it so many times.

(By the way, Kokomi's practice coffee jelly from yesterday is still in the fridge at home, so I've successfully managed to stop you, four-eyed creep, from licking all over her coffee jelly, and I'll get to enjoy the sweet nectar of victory by licking all over her coffee jelly!)

Why can a dangerous guy like this roam around the streets freely? What's the Japanese police up to? Not to mention they let him perform on TV, and he's even popular among viewers. What has the world come to?

Now what am I going to do? I don't think I'll be able to go home right away. I don't want someone like that following me. But I also don't want to walk right into that *oh!*-ing crowd in front of me. Fortunately, it seems like this creepy older brother still hasn't noticed that Teruhashi-san is already inside the shop preparing coffee jelly at this very moment. His thoughts right now are:

(Come to think of it, why is there such a huge crowd there? Did a famous actor show up or something?)

Something like that.

Meanwhile, the crowd in front of the café keeps growing. How did it get so large…?

Seems like the rumor of a perfect girl preparing coffee jelly at an unreasonable speed has spread around town. I didn't expect that to happen. What a mess…

The information has spread so widely, that even a news crew showed up.

And so their live report begins.

"Please take a look! This is the famed perfect girl preparing coffee jelly at an unreasonable speed! She's *oh!* This can only be described as *oh!*"

Even helicopters have begun flying around the shop. Additionally, several onlookers have become curious, *oh!*-ing as they gather. Apparently even the perverted older brother has started to notice all those people *oh!*-ing.

(So it's not an actor…? Don't tell me that crowd is there because Kokomi is preparing coffee jelly while wearing a maid uniform?! The "oh!" density per square meter seems appropriate. That's the only option!)

That's far too precise. When did you become an esper as well? Besides, what was that about the *"oh!"* density? Don't start coming up with your own original concepts. That'll only cause confusion among our readers.

And then, all of a sudden…

"What the hell do you think you're doooing?! Stop filming! Stooop it!!"

The perverted older brother started yelling as he ran towards the crew. He walked through the crowd of curious onlookers and jumped at the cameraman.

"We're not filming! We're not filmiiing!!"

The crowd starts yelling back at the perverted older brother as he lunges himself on top of the cameraman like an enraged ape.

"Whoa?! What's with this guy?! Is he a criminal?!"

"Stop it! Someone call the police!"

"Stop watching TV! Stooop it! Cut your broadcaaast!!"

The television crew and the enraged perverted brother. Why is he freaking out all of a sudden?

I listen to the perverted older brother's thoughts on Teruhashi-san.

(I can't let them show a perfect girl like Kokomi on television. If she appears on a news broadcast or something, she might eventually be known as the 'perfect little girl,' and will get invited to variety shows and even film appearances. She will then be turned into a famous idol, and after making her debut, not only will she be well known in Japan, but also the entire world. And then she will have fans from all over the world as well. Her songs will explode abroad, and she will get called to do international movies. First she'll win an Academy Award, but eventually she'll win every single renowned award from every country in the world for sure. Cults that worship Kokomi as their Goddess will start appearing, and then humanity will start fighting blood with blood, and wars will start taking place. People will start fighting in the name of "oh!," which will undoubtedly lead to… that's right… World War Three. Damn it! Only I can touch Kokomi as her older brother! You bastards aren't even on Kokomi's level! However, despite my wishes, the battles for Kokomi will start getting more and more intense, and finally will destroy the entire world. And in that post-apocalyptic world, certainly a manly guy with a mohawk will show up and

start attacking the survivors for water, food, oil, and Kokomi's homemade coffee jelly. In that fallen world, Kokomi will still be worshipped as a goddess, and keep giving people hope by making them go "oh!" However, the evil man with the mohawk will try to capitalize her beauty and keep her for himself. But I won't let him do that. Kokomi, run away with me. I've figured out mohawk's plan completely, so let me take your sweet, pale hands, and let's run away together to the wasteland. I won't let you go no matter what… Because in order to save this destroyed earth, we will have to become the new Adam and Eve…!)

That's too long. I'm not going to read that.

As he attacks the news reporters, the perverted older brother's sunglasses, hat and eventually mask as well, end up falling to the floor. Which means that now everyone can tell that person was Mugami Toru, the famed actor. And so the crowd of curious onlookers start gasping in surprise.

"Huh? Isn't that Mugami Toru?"

"What? Why is he here?!"

"Eh? What's going on? Are they shooting a TV show?"

Hearing the people start talking around him, the perverted older brother manages to cool himself down a bit, and he puts on his Mugami Toru face. He slowly steps away from the camera he was about to destroy, and says:

"That's right…? I'm Mugami Toru. I'm a… surprise guest…?"

The news crew look completely astonished, and can only look at him as he calmly starts speaking.

The perverted older brother—I mean, Mugami Toru, starts beaming and waving at the crowd of onlookers. And he also shakes their hands, one after the other. He's also giving out autographs.

I guess this guy is only good at maintaining his appearance.

However, there's no way that a popular actor will show up in the middle of the street just like that, and people will let him be. His female fans start screaming and pushing against the crowd of onlookers.

To be honest, the crowd so far was mostly male, since people wanted to see Teruhashi-san in a maid uniform as she prepared coffee jelly. And while the crowd inside and around the cafe remains mostly male because

they want to see Teruhashi-san and Mera-san, a much larger female crowd is also starting to gather around Mugami Toru.

So what now?

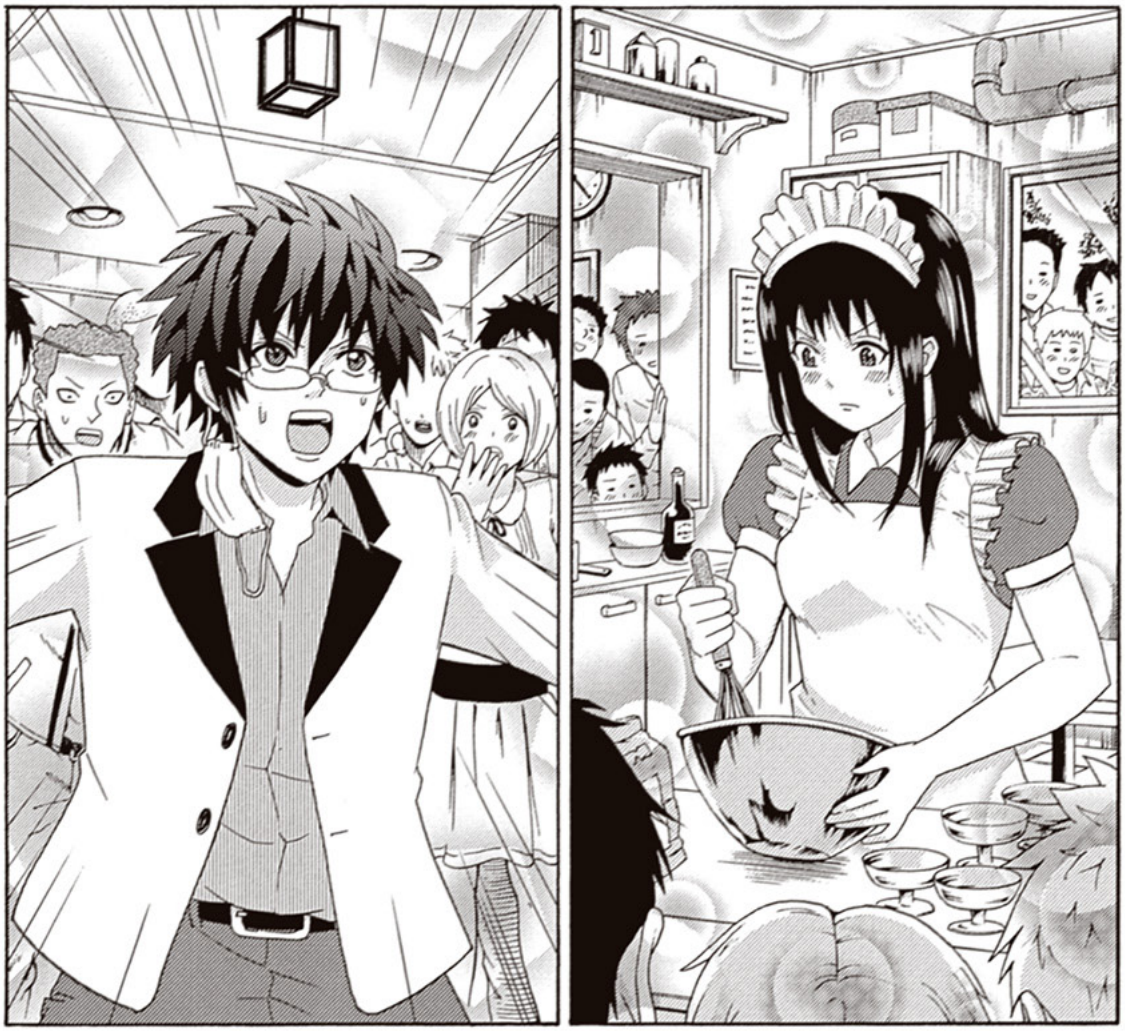
The place has practically become a battlefield.

Men and women, young and old are hearing the rumors and gathering as well. Even more reporters, police officers and even a manly guy with a mohawk are starting to show up as well. It's a sight to behold, accompanied by the loud noise of the helicopters flying over the scene. Wait, so there really was a manly guy with a mohawk who wanted to get some coffee jelly after all.

I get pushed into the crowd without being able to do anything, and get completely stuck. In the chaos, my glasses start to slip off.

Ugh! This is not good…

I can't do anything when I'm surrounded by crowds like this, there's no way I could use my psychic powers here.



What a fearsome pair of siblings Teruhashi-san in a maid outfit and Mugami Toru can make.

All jokes aside, I'm really scared the entire world would collapse if Teruhashi-san ever were to wear some cat-ears.

I keep moving along the crowd, until eventually I find myself right in front of the café without even noticing.

This is great. Now that I'm this far, maybe I'll be able to have some coffee jelly and finally go home. My original plan was to get some coffee jelly regardless of whatever Teruhashi-san was doing. I don't care if the *"oh!"* club shows up in front of the shop, I don't care if her perverted older brother starts harassing me, I have no reason to change my original plans for any of those things.

I finally reach the door and open it, when suddenly—

(We're out of ingredients…)

Teruhashi-san is standing there, looking pale and worn out.

I discreetly close the door.

(What a shame… and Saiki didn't even show up in the end…)

Teruhashi-san is completely motionless, barely catching her breath. The clients are *"oh-ing"* as they eat her coffee jelly. Mera-san is beaming as she counts today's profits. The manager collapses on the floor completely exhausted… I check on the situation inside the café one more time, and finally decide to go home.

I see the perverted older brother smiling, surrounded by his fans. He seems to be completely occupied with the TV crew and fans, so I don't think he's going to follow me anymore.

I have no business here if there's no more coffee jelly.

I somehow slip away from the crowd, and begin walking by myself. What a terrible day. I got swept away by a large crowd, and couldn't even get to eat some coffee jelly.

The only thing that could make me feel better was that coffee jelly in the first place.

I stop by a close-by convenience store and buy some coffee jelly. I choose a very high-quality coffee jelly that costs a good amount of my monthly allowance. Maybe this might help me get rid of the sour aftertaste left in my mouth after this awful day.

After exiting the convenience store, I realize there is still a large crowd in front of the café. Actually, it seems to be getting bigger for some reason. The Teruhashi siblings are truly scary.

And then suddenly, for some reason, I start hearing Teruhashi-san's thoughts very clearly from inside the shop.

(I'm not going to give up… A perfect girl doesn't budge even after one or two failures! Saiki Kunio… I'm going to get my surprise "oh!" next time!)

I figured. Of course Teruhashi-san is thinking something along those lines. That's why I wanted to get rid of this surprise ploy of hers today.

(That's right!)

Teruhashi-san seems to have come up with something yet again.

(If I'm going to surprise him anyway, I should prepare something with more impact than some regular coffee jelly. Like for example, a coffee jelly that looks completely white but still has the same taste.)

Sorry, Teruhashi-san. We already did that.

(Hah! And I will be the one carrying that pure white coffee jelly dressed in a pure white dress myself. I'm sure Saiki won't be able to hold back and go "oh!" after something like that! Pure white is the color of a bride, after all… N-No, that's not what I mean at all! Don't get the wrong impression, there's no deeper meaning to that! I'm just thinking of a surprise, after all!)

She keeps repeating that same excuse to herself.

(…But still…)

Teruhashi-san sighs.

(I practiced so much… I really wanted you to try some… Saiki…)

I turn my back to Teruhashi's voice inside the cafe, and start walking.

"Practiced…" huh?

I take out the coffee jelly from the bag I got at the convenience store. That's right. I don't know if this is going to work, but it might be worth a try. I gaze closely at the coffee jelly I'm holding in my hand, and suddenly it transforms.

Bingo.

I use my apport ability, and in an instant, change the contents of the cup. The new jelly is, in fact, the leftovers from the practice Teruhashi had been doing at home that were previously in her refrigerator. I only happened to find out because of what her brother was thinking. Who knew he could be useful sometimes?

I look at the newly acquired coffee jelly, and hear Teruhashi-san's thoughts once again.

(Ugh! Why didn't Saiki come?! I was waiting for him with a surprise! Any other guy would've been over the moon!)

You make no sense at all.

It wouldn't be a surprise if they already knew about it. Besides, no normal guy would've been able to predict a surprise was waiting for them in a place like this.

As long as they weren't an esper…

With the bag of homemade coffee jelly in my hand, I set off on my way home.

Interlude With a Guest 2: The Detective's Melancholy

I'm sitting in the classroom, reading a novel during break, when suddenly the guy sitting next to me mutters:

"How boring… Why won't an interesting incident or something happen?"

I pay him no mind, and keep reading. I guess you could say the interesting incident is taking place right now in my book.

Then that same student once again raises his voice and says:

"I guess a murder or something would be interesting… Why won't the entire class die?"

That's a sickening statement that goes way beyond just scandalous. Even I have to take a look.

Just who is this person anyway?

There's a student I've never seen before sitting next to me. He's wearing a hat that covers his eyes, a scarf, and a coat, despite being indoors. And there's a pipe in his mouth.

He looks just like a detective straight out of a manga or a film. Was this guy always here? Did he take someone else's place?

As I'm pondering that, he finally notices my gaze, and looks at me from within the hat's shadow. Come to think of it, I've seen this guy somewhere before.

I think you're the main character in that famous manga within the "Disastrous Life of Saiki K." universe written by Asou Shuuichi.

I believe the title was "Mikami: Case Files?" What are you doing here? Is this some sort of advertisement like those you'd normally see on variety shows? You sure get around.

"I hope our first volume… sells more copies," he tells me, and then goes back to staring into space and muttering…

"But it sure is boring around here… When will I get to do something?"

His expression remains unchanged, and his sight fixed into nothing. He's pretty hard to read. However, I'm an esper. I know what he's thinking.

Well, I guess there's no need to listen to his thoughts, though. It's just as he says, there's nothing for him to do until some sort of incident takes place. I guess it can't be helped, there's nothing to do. Besides, he decided to show up on his own.

"I'm basically unemployed unless someone dies… that's the life of a detective. It's pretty unfortunate."

I think that's kind of extreme, but it's true that there's no reason for a detective to be here.

"Could someone at least steal some of the girls' underpants or P.E uniforms? Even some slippers would work. Leaving murders aside, incidents like that take place every day… I wish this school could give detectives like me an easier time…"

A school like that sounds pretty serious.

Besides, who would even enroll in a school where incidents like that are everyday occurrences? Moreover, I feel like we'd be able to figure out the culprit was Toritsuka almost immediately after an incident like that takes place.

"Right. I guess a famous detective like me would serve no purpose if you could figure out the culprit right away," he mutters, and then stares back into space.

"I would like an incident with more impact, anyway…"

He looks pained again as he says that. How long is he going to stay here? I'm not going to be able to concentrate on my book as long as he's still sitting right beside me.

"I know! What about that sorcerer behind school?"

I close my book and stand up. However, Mikami keeps talking.

"I heard someone shady wrote some mysterious characters and drew an evil sorcerer symbol behind the school building—"

That was Kaidou.

“Really? So you already figured it out?”

I guess you could say we let him do it, actually. No one wants to go with him.

“Then what about the mysterious ‘Classroom Steam Bath’ incident? I heard there was a suspicious guy that hoped things got ‘hotter!’ and encouraged others to ‘not give up!’ despite it being summer—”

I don’t even know what he’s talking about anymore. I take a deep breath, and get closer to the window. I stare outside.

Mikami gets even more discouraged than he already was by the lack of stakes.

“Then could at least someone suspicious just show up?”

That’s the worst option yet.

“I just need an incident to happen… I’m so bored I could die…!”

Mikami… has pretty dangerous thoughts. Is it okay to have a guy like this around? Besides, just wishing an incident will take place won’t get you anywhere.

After all…

I keep looking outside the window, and see a shady man try to climb over the closed school gate. However, the police immediately arrive and pull him down. Good grief, so they made it in time.

This wouldn’t even make the news.

I used my telepathy to let a nearby patrol know about him. I let them know a shady guy was trying to break into PK academy.

I watch as the police take the suspect away. Sorry Mikami, but this isn’t “Mikami: Case Files,” it’s “The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.” No incidents will take place as long as I’m here.

“I’m so bored… Huh?! Was that just…? Nah, just my imagination.”

He suddenly stands up, and then immediately sits back down. I go back to my reading. Police novels are really good. Especially those that don’t let you know who the culprit is until the very end. On the other hand, I can

always immediately tell who the culprit is in real life, since I can read people's minds.

"Seems like… nothing's gonna happen…"

I turn the page. What are you talking about? An incident just took place. In the book, that is.

Chapter 3 The Disastrous Life of Saiki Kusuko

It’s still summer.

I’m standing still on the road, looking at the trees.

Cicadas can be heard all around me, as if they’re trying to make the summer heat even more intense. I don’t sweat at all thanks to my psychic powers, but the loud cicadas can get just as annoying as the most intense summer heat to me. That sound… I wonder if only Japanese people are able to tell it’s summer, and even feel heat, just from hearing a sound. The thought suddenly comes to mind.

I guess foreigners that have never seen a cicada in their entire lives will know it just as that annoying sound heard in Japanese anime and dramas in the summer, without understanding its meaning. The thought process goes like: “Cicadas -> Summer -> Hot.” That’s probably why they can’t feel heat just from this sound.

Speaking of cicadas, I remember Nendou saying something about them. It was on a summer day just like this one.

I was walking together with Nendou under an unrelenting blue summer sky, while the sounds of cicadas surrounded us.

I guess it was a little past noon, the hottest time of day. And since it would’ve been strange for us to be out at that time on a regular school day, we must’ve been on break. Probably summer break? I can’t remember why I was spending my precious vacation time with Nendou of all people, but considering he’s the only person whose thoughts I can’t read at all, he probably just popped out of nowhere. In any case, as my bad luck would have it, I was walking next to Nendou that hot summer day.

And then suddenly, Nendou stopped right under a tree.

“Oh? Take a look, partner. Listen to the cicadas…”

He screwed up his face as he talked.

I had been walking under the blazing sun all along, so I stepped under the tree’s shadow and looked up. I couldn’t see a single cicada. I tried looking for it despite the intense sunlight that occasionally passed through the leaves, when suddenly Nendou opened his mouth.

“You know cicadas live life at their fullest in summer? Every year, when I see those cicadas, I can’t help but think… I’d like to live my life like a cicada too… or something like that.”

What's he even talking about? Is he trying to say that he's going to die after the summer?

I remember taking a good look at Nendou's face right then. When was that? I feel like it happened a long time ago.

But right now it's summer.

Which means it happened just a few weeks ago? No, that's not possible. I'm sure I would remember it more clearly if that were the case. Come to think of it, it feels like I've spent many summers with Nendou already. However, that's also impossible. I'm in my second year of high school, and I met him for the first time in my first year. We would already be out of school if we had really spent several summers together. But that's not the case…

I remember a strange feeling. And then I reflect on it.

How many summers has it been so far?

I've stayed quiet about it and simply let things run their course, but there's something strange with this world. Perhaps we're stuck in one of those very common looping stories.

Well, that doesn't seem very likely. If this world truly were looping, then it would probably be my fault in the first place, but not even I could do something like that. I'm not sure what would happen if I removed the limiter on the right side of my head, but even then I don't think I could do something like that… at least, I hope so.

However, there's definitely something strange about this world right now. Something's off. Something that's not a loop. I'm sure I can't tell what since I've gotten used to it, but there's something off.

I keep walking towards school, as I feel a heavy sensation in my chest.

The school looks the same as always at a first glance. I leave my shoes in the locker, put on my slippers and go upstairs. Something's strange. This is the same floor as always, yet for some reason I can't shake the feeling that I'm in a different world. I enter the classroom, and head straight towards my seat. I sit down, and immediately Kaidou starts talking to me, just like always.

"Hah! Saiki… The apocalypse is finally upon us…"

This is the first thing you have to say? Kaidou is blabbering about some nonsense, just like always. And I'm ignoring him, just like always. But still… what is it? Something's not right.

"Can't you hear the voices of the poor souls that have passed on beyond the end…?"

Even Kaidou's stupid dialogue seems to be somewhat different from usual. Why is this happening? I really can't figure it out… I don't know why I'm feeling so uneasy…

I keep pondering, and I look at Kaidou's face.

However, unsurprisingly, there was nothing unusual about him. He had eyeshadow on both his eyes, he had dark lipstick on his mouth, and his face was painted white, almost like a demon from some metal band album cover.

"Huh? What's wrong Saiki? You look like you've just witnessed a pigeon snatch a pea mid-flight while being targeted by a peashooter… No, it's more as if you've just witnessed the artificial god 'Pigeon Saber,' born from a potent powder, singing the requiem of all requiems."

What happened to you?

I wasn't expecting that. He's definitely not the same as always. Kaidou is acting weird. Well, I guess he has always been weird, but not *this* kind of weird.

That's it, I've figured it out. This strange feeling…!

I've finally noticed.

We're not in some looping world, but in a parallel world. All decisions in life branch out and lead to different futures. For example, as small as it may seem, imagine that I have to choose between ramen or curry for lunch. This is a textbook divergence point. Let's say I go for ramen. I go home and we have curry for dinner. This results in a completely normal and uneventful day. However, what would've happened if I chose curry instead? I would've gone home, and had curry as well, and I would've finished my day with a sour mood. Even if I didn't choose curry myself, there's a future and a world out there where I did. It truly does exist.

This is bad. I've been transported to a parallel world again…

That's right, I've been to a different parallel world before. In that world, everything was determined by the results of the popularity poll, and one's social status was dictated by their ranking. It was a cruel world. The ones with higher popularity would get *"oh!-ed"* all the time, while others would get treated horribly.

That world came about from the divergence created by helping a dog in the first chapter of volume 1. It seems that in the opening of that chapter, there was a branching point based on my decision to help the dog or not. Back then, I used my psychic powers to save the dog. I may have exerted a bit too much effort since it were the colored opening pages of the manga series, but regardless, I managed to save the dog.

However, another me from another world that wasn't able to save it also existed at the same time. That different possibility eventually led him to a different future. One where I got myself involved in a lot of things, and I was popular, and lived surrounded by friends.

That's how big of a gap just saving a dog can create.

That gap got bigger and bigger with time, until eventually my entire perspective and personality were affected as well.

And at the end of that fork, there was a different future waiting for me, just like right now.

By the way, despite being treated as an outsider for being a chuunibyou in my original world, and just being annoying in general much like Nendou, in a world where popularity was all that mattered, Kaidou was in quite a different position as well.

He ranked second in the popularity contest, and had formed an organization called "Ocean Wisteria" that fought against the "Dark Reunion" with a considerable number of followers.

But this world's Kaidou is different from the one I saw in the popularity poll world.

First of all, his face is weird. He's wearing makeup like some sort of demon, and his general vibe is completely different. How should I explain it? He seems kind of evil.

Now that I think about it, "evil" is the kind of word that good old "Jet-Black Wings" Kaidou Shun would like. However, this isn't a fashionable

kind of evil, this guy really looks twisted. In any case, his appearance and general demeanor is different from the Kaidou I know.

“Kha kha kha! You stupid human! You can vanish…!”

And it’s not just his appearance or his aura, he also says evil things. He’s definitely weird.

The Kaidou I know would use evil powers, but seal them inside his own body without losing his sense of self, and instead fight the secret organization known as “Dark Reunion” (or so his story goes).

This world’s Kaidou seems to be completely different.

“The ‘Mankind Sorting Plan’ is already in its final stages…”

Kaidou keeps muttering to himself. It probably sounds like his usual ramblings to the untrained ear.

That “Mankind Sorting Plan” is something that the original Kaidou talked about thwarting when fighting against the “Dark Reunion.” However, there’s something off about the way this Kaidou is saying it.

“Ha ha ha! Saiki, you wanna join the Dark Reunion as well?”

What does he mean “as well?” It’s almost as if… I see, I got it.

Kaidou laughs quietly. And then says, “Hah…Saiki, you can’t just stay the way you are. Someone with talents like yours could even become an executive! Come on, join us and become part of the Dark Reunion!”

So he finally said “us.” This Kaidou is definitely a Dark Reunion member.

“Mwahahaha! Tremble, Ocean Wisteria dogs!”

I finally got it. The thing that was bothering me about Kaidou’s dialogue was that his allegiances were completely flipped. He’s not speaking from Black Wings’ perspective, but from the Dark Reunion’s.

How did this happen…? Did this world’s Kaidou never find the motivation to betray the Dark Reunion and stop their “Mankind Sorting Plan?”

No, that didn’t happen in any world. Ever. Those are just some delusions Kaidou used to have, and then wrote down in his “Dark History Notebook.”

In which case, this inverted Kaidou was a chuunibyou so severe, he eventually became evil and joined the Dark Reunion. Not content with just wearing bandages to seal his powers, he took it to the next level and started wearing makeup and wishing humanity was extinguished.

He's pretty dangerous. Far more dangerous than the Kaidou I'm used to.

"Mwahaha! Soon this world will be destroyed, and we'll build a new one!"

Kaidou opens his arms wide and loudly announces. A student screams at Kaidou's loud outburst.

"Nooo! Stop it!"

He's curled up on the floor, holding his head between his legs, and trembling.

"Hah! Excellent! Give me more! Tremble before me! Show me your despair, your symphony of hopelessness! The screams of humanity, devoid of all hope, are the sweetest melody to my ears!"

Perhaps in response to the student's reaction, evil Kaidou now starts yelling "This world will fall! Mwahaha! This world will fall!" and pacing around him like a vulture. The student screams again.

"I can't take this! I'm scared! Stop it! If the world is ending, then I'm also done for!"

He's trembling like a small puppy. Just who is that? Was there someone like that in our class?

"It's over! You won't be saved! No one will! Give up hope, that's your only option!"

However, I know this voice. I can't believe… that's Hairo?

I look at the student trembling at any negative thoughts and screaming on the floor. I can't take a good look at his face. His aura is so negative, he's engulfed in shadows so it's hard to see him clearly. However, based on his general appearance and voice, that's Hairo, no doubt about it.

"Ah, it's hopeless! I'm going to die anyway! There's no point in trying anymore!"

He keeps embracing his own head and screaming.

“It’s all pointless! There’s no point in living! Stop this already!”

The Hairo I know is all about an almost annoying and loud passion.

This one is moping around, depressed, but he’s still pretty loud.

“I can’t do this, there’s no way, there’s no way, there’s no waaay!!”

Hairo is usually so passionate to the point that it can be overwhelming and makes me feel overheated. The Hairo in this world is just as expressive and passionate, but he only shouts negative things, which has a disheartening effect. His loud voice manages to bring everyone’s mood down.

Good grief, even I’m starting to get affected listening to him…

Evil Kaidou and depressed Hairo. How terrible. This is far too different from the old world I knew. Just where was the divergence point that led us to this future?

And then suddenly, I hear a bike engine in the distance. The sound gets progressively louder and louder. Seems like it’s getting closer. I look in its direction down the hallway when suddenly:

“The name’s Kuboyasu Aren, I’m the new guy! Nice to beat ya!”

Kuboyasu shows up riding his bike, sporting a pompadour with a mullet, a biker jacket and a steel pipe in his hand, and breaks the classroom’s window from the hallway. What’s going on…?

This is a Kuboyasu that wasn’t trying to become a functional member of society, but instead somehow became even rougher once he transferred over to PK Academy. I guess you could call him “Mullet-wearing Aren?”

I’m at a complete loss for words, but Kaidou, Hairo and Kuboyasu weren’t the only ones that had changed.

Taking a look around the classroom, Yumehara-san was passionately drawing a manga with half-naked men embracing each other. Her eyes are bloodshot as she draws non-stop, and occasionally gives herself a sly smile. She looks hard to approach. Some things about her look similar to old Yumehara, but she seems much more unapproachable.

And Mera-san looks very different as well, as she’s wearing high-end luxury sunglasses and a necklace. Apparently all her teeth are covered in pure gold, I notice as she smiles.

Perhaps noticing me staring, Mera-san calls out to me.

“Oh! Saiki-han! What’s’a matter? Why’re ya so glum?”

What’s with your completely awful accent? Besides, this is my normal face.

“Ya can’t go ‘round with a dark expression like that, ya hear? That’s no good! Let me show ya somethin’ good!”

She immediately pulls out a roll of banknotes, and sets it on fire. She starts waving it around like a torch, and smiles, showing her golden teeth.

“Ya like it? It got brighter, huh? Don’t ya think the world sparkles when ya do this? This is what I call ‘The Filthy Rich Power Generator!’ Pretty revolutionary, huh? I’m gonna clear Japan’s skies with this baby!”

She sets the burnt roll aside, takes out a new one, and sets it on fire as well.

“Don’t ya think the world looks wonderful when ya have enough money to throw away?”

Mera-san throws the burning banknotes away and laughs giddily. The Mera-san from my world would throw herself at a burning banknote without hesitation.

Yumehara-san and Mera-san were also different from their usual selves. I don’t even want to imagine what Teruhashi-san looks like. I catch a glimpse of some robed men from the corner of my eye. They seem to be wearing a sash that reads “Church of *Oh!,*” and are carrying out some kind of ritual. I’ll pretend I can’t see them. I’ll also pretend I can’t see the mysterious high school girl standing in the middle of them wearing a red mask.

Having taken a general look around the classroom, I’m able to conclude this world has changed dramatically. It’s not just people like Yumehara-san or Mera-san. All of my classmates seem to have changed at least a little. For example, look at Takahashi…

…Well, yeah… I guess background characters like him haven’t changed much.

Takahashi didn’t change at all when I went to the popularity poll world, but I wasn’t expecting him to be the same here as well. This guy’s sense of stability is actually quite remarkable.

By the way, I have managed to narrow down what all of my classmates in this parallel world have in common. “Evil Kaidou,” “Depressed Hairo,” “Hasn’t Gotten Rid of the Mullet,” “Is Drawing Some Weird Manga,” “Easy-To-Read Filthy Rich” and the “Church of *Oh!*”

CHURCH OF OH!
OH!
CHURCH OF OH!

Leaving “Stable Takahashi” aside, they’ve all chosen the wrong path at some point. That’s all I can think of. Something went wrong at some point, and so we ended up in this world.

That’s right, I almost forgot!

I carefully scan my surroundings.

The ramen-obsessed idiot that refuses to shut up like a cicada is still missing.

The only person whose thoughts I can’t read… The most troublesome person who can sneak up on me at any moment because I can’t ever tell what he’s thinking, hasn’t made his appearance.

What if he’s acting strange like that one time…?

In our first novelized volume, Nendou suffered from a sudden case of amnesia, and he appeared suddenly holding a philosophy book in his hand, and talking about Nietzsche, or NEET, or whatever. That was annoying.

I hold my breath, and inspect the classroom slowly. I don’t know how he looks or where he’s hiding. I can’t read his mind, after all. Slowly, slowly…

Huh? That’s strange…

I take another look around the classroom. I use my x-ray vision to look inside the cleaning closet. I even look inside the trash can and below the blackboard, just in case.

However, he’s not here. That unpleasant guy is nowhere to be found…

I turn my head from side to side…

“What are you doing, Saiki? Did you decide to finally join us in the Dark Reunion?” Makeup Kaidou asks me.

But this is not the time for that.

The guy that loves ramen and is constantly going “eh?” is not here.

“Huh? You’re looking for a Nando’s? What are you talking about? There are no chicken places in this area!”

I open my eyes wide at Kaidou. Hairo, who was listening to our conversation, stands up and says, “I don’t know… who that is! Waaahh!! And I’m still completely useless waaaahhh!!”

He’s screaming, and then collapses on the floor while bawling his eyes out. Why did you even stand up, then?

I guess that settles it.

In this world… Nendou Riki doesn’t exist!

What a great world! This is certainly a wonderful world I can live in! I’m completely invincible if someone as unpredictable as Nendou isn’t around. Finally no one’s going to be able to grab me by the collar to go get “ramen.” This is the best. Besides, no one’s going to go around calling me “partner” in this world either. It’s heaven on Earth. I never imagined a world this convenient could exist! Without Nendou here… Without Nendou here… My school life will… Without Nendou here…

Ugh, why aren’t you here, Nendou?! Guess I’m more curious about it than I expected.

I can’t believe I’m actually concerned about whether Nendou exists or not.

I check the classroom once again. I’m sure something else must be amiss if Nendou is missing. I take a closer look. Apparently, nothing about the classroom has changed at all. There are the same number of seats. *Which means the number of students hasn’t changed either.* Never mind Nendou, that means there must be someone else—

“Hey, what’s the matter, Saiki-kun?”

Someone suddenly calls out to me from behind. No, I guess it wasn’t so sudden after all. Considering this isn’t Nendou, I knew they were there to begin with.

However, I can’t believe it was this guy…

I turn around, and see a man standing behind me, wearing a full trenchcoat in the middle of summer. He’s even wearing a scarf around his neck, along with a newsboy cap and a pipe in his mouth. I feel like I’ve seen him before somewhere.

Mikami Mei…!

He's the protagonist of "Mikami: Case Files," a manga that used to be published in the former Akamaru Jump (now known as "Jump NEXT") until it got canceled.

I guess he couldn't stay quiet after he appeared as an intermission guest. I thought he had just stopped by to say hello, but I never imagined he'd be a part of a main chapter as well.

"Saiki, are you looking for someone?" Mikami asks me while chewing on his pipe. He looks sternly at me.

His hat almost completely covers his dark eyes, and his expression is hard to read. I can't figure out what this guy is thinking. Or that's what a normal person would say. However, that doesn't apply to me.

(If you're looking for someone, you can leave it to a private detective like me.)

Unlike Nendou, I can read Mikami's mind.

When I give a faint smile, Mikami seems to misunderstand and says "By the way, my name is Makami Mei not Mikaimei." Do people make that mistake that frequently?

(TL Note: This is a gag originating from the Mikami: Case Files manga. Mikaimei means "unsolved" or "unexplained.")

"Are you looking for someone? In that case, you can leave it to a private detective like me."

Mikami's eyes shine with excitement. He seems happy.

However, there's no point in mentioning Nendou to Mikami. He might be a private detective, but there's no way he could find someone who doesn't even exist in this world.

Besides, I think I already have an idea of what's going on. I better ask *him* instead of Mikami.

"Really? That's a shame."

Mikami looks really disappointed after finding out there are no mysteries to solve.

“But, well… to be honest, I’m actually looking for someone myself, for a different case.”

He raises his index finger, and his expression turns daring.

“I’m trying to solve the case of the ‘Missing Principal of PK Academy’ right now!”

Principal…? Ah, the guy that talks during the morning assemblies…

Mikami happily continues, “He has disappeared. I talked to his family and they say he hasn’t been home for the past two or three days.”

You should report that. This is no longer a job for a private detective, but for the police.

“After two or three days missing, this might no longer be an abduction or capture, but downright murder, and so it’s just appropriate that we investigate. *(I’m so excited!)*”

That only proves my point that we should report it. Besides, why are you getting so happy about this?

There’s someone missing, you know? How can you go all “so excited!” inside your head about that?

Good grief… what an unpleasant detective.

Moreover, being near Mikami makes me feel stuffy because of his coat and scarf. Even though he’s emanating an overheating feeling, much like the Hairo from my world, his tone and demeanor are completely different. He’s calm and collected. But his appearance sure is something else… aren’t you feeling hot dressed like that?

Mikami bitterly laughs at my remark.

“This is a detective’s trademark. I’m wearing it so I don’t stand out.”

Clothes so stereotypical to a detective or investigator will stand out even more, even in the winter.

Mikami continues as he wipes the sweat from his forehead, “Also, it’s imperative for a detective like me, who spends hours of the day outside, to be completely used to extreme heat and cold. You never know when you

might find yourself face to face with a murder scene in the desert under the scorching sun, where the suspect used boiling oden as a weapon."

You're never going to be in that exact situation in your entire life, rest assured.

By the way, now that I take a closer look, you seem to be sweating an awful lot. So you're feeling hot after all?

"In any case, I'm chasing the trail of the 'Missing Principal of PK Academy' right now. No matter the outcome, I will solve this mystery with my own hands!"

What do you mean by "no matter the outcome?" That's too ominous. Just call the police already.

"Because I am—"

Mikami grins as he bites his pipe. I've already heard Mikami's next words. I can hear his thoughts, after all. However, I can't believe what he's going to say…

"—this novel's protagonist!" he says as he adjusts his trenchcoat, and leaves the classroom.

I skip my classes and head behind the school building.

I would normally never skip my classes, since that would make me stand out, but today is not the time to worry about that. Especially since I'm in a parallel world. The people who were already troublesome in my original world are even more annoying in this world. Staying in a classroom with them for class is no laughing matter. I'd have to listen to Evil Kaidou's world-ending delusions non-stop if I stayed.

Besides, I think I can get a little leeway since Mikami also seems to be absent from the classroom after going on his search, and Mullet-wearing Aren is riding around school on his bike, skipping class as well. I'm sure even if I did the same, I wouldn't stand out negatively more than any of them in this world.

That aside, though, Mikami said he was now the protagonist of this novel. What is he talking about? It really didn't seem like a joke at all.

Not only is Nendou absent from this world, but Mikami is saying things like that. This world is fundamentally different from my own.

Though I think I know the answer already.

I've turned into my female form. I can change my body at will, and I can turn into a woman, an animal, or any living creature, really, as long as it's not anyone that already exists. I could've become a cat as well, but I have to talk to a certain man, so I had to be able to speak. Speaking as a cat is particularly difficult. You can call me "Saiki Kusuko."

In order to meet that certain man, I have to do this, or at least become someone other than Saiki Kusuo. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to do it.

I have to meet him as Saiki Kusuko in order to figure out the mystery behind this world. I'm sure he has already made his move to see me as well. I look around me. Right now people are in class, so there's not a single soul around the school building.

I already used my telepathy to make sure there's no one around. And it's best for both of us if that's the case.

(Perfect. This works out well.)

A voice echoes inside my head.

It sounds far closer than anybody else's, and it's objectively creepy to listen to. I immediately see the man speaking. He's on top of the school building.

I look up, turning my back to the fence, and see him on the rooftop. And the following instant, he's falling. It all happened in the blink of an eye.

However, I simply watch him fall in silence, and just as it seems like he's about to crash into the ground, his body disappears, just like a specter. This man can do that with ease. I know that, because I can do it with ease as well.

(Good grief, I can finally show up…)

The voice comes from behind me. I turn around and see myself, this world's Saiki Kusuo standing in front of me.

There's an infinite number of parallel worlds, but all of them have the same simple rule: "The same person can't exist in the same world twice." Which means that since only one Saiki Kusuo can exist in this world at the same time, this world's original me won't be able to coexist as long as I'm here.

That's why I've become Saiki Kusuko. It's so I can meet this world's me. The Saiki from the popularity poll world felt guilty because he couldn't save the dog in the first chapter, so he started using his powers to help others all the time.

As a result, he ended up surrounded by dear friends and became a bright and cheerful young man. But I wonder, what kind of person the Saiki Kusuo in this world became?

The Saiki in front of me looks exactly the same as always, though that goes without saying. His hair is pink, he's wearing his two hairpin limiters and glasses with green lenses. Seeing my own figure in front of me from an outsider's perspective is pretty hard to conceptualize. It's a completely different feeling from seeing oneself in the mirror.

Alright then, where did Nendou go, why is Mikami here, how did this world branch off so far away from my own, and why was I summoned to this parallel world in the first place? There are many things I'd like to know, but staying as Saiki Kusuko forever sounds like a hassle, so my main priority right now is going back to my previous world.

That's right, in order to return, I need this world's Saiki Kusuo to help me. Moving between universes requires more power than I can handle on my own.

Besides, I'm an outsider to this world. Getting this world's Saiki Kusuo to help me is my best option. I'm sure I'll be fine with that. That's probably all I need to do.

(Transformation, huh…?)

This world's me mutters. He's using telepathy to make his voice reach my brain.

*(I'm really glad I'm finally able to exist again. I thought that's what you, no, what **I** would do.)*

He says, and a slight grin appears on his face. And then—

(Are you wondering about Nendou?)

He asks.

That's strange. Is he reading my mind? Although I can't read this Saiki's mind very well.

It's like trying to pick up a weak radio signal. Several other voices keep getting in the way, and it's hard to hear clearly.

At first, I thought, "As expected. I can't read my own mind," but he seems to be able to read my thoughts while I can't clearly read his. Why…?

(You're wondering why Nendou's not here or where he went, right?)

Saiki asks again.

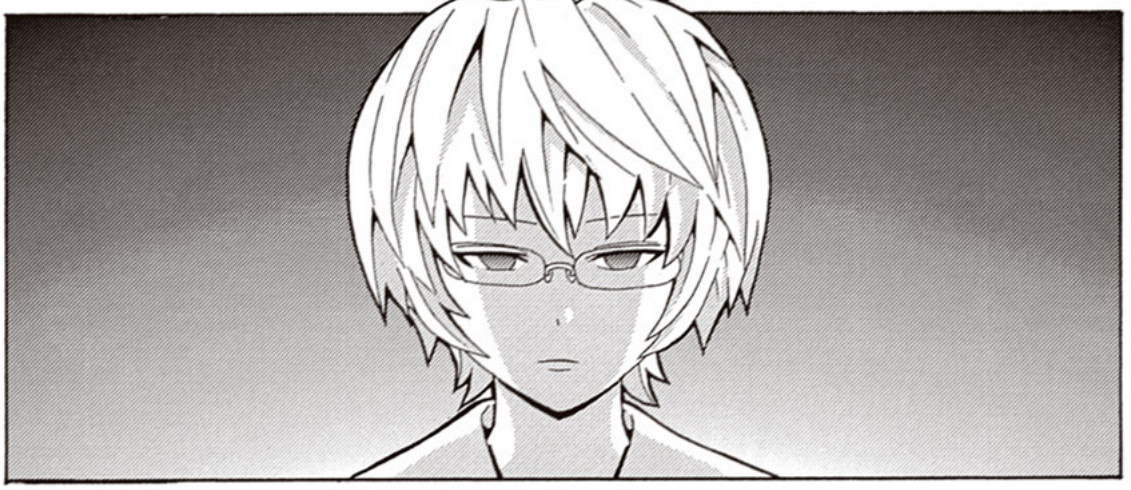
The Saiki Kusuo in this world is certainly more persistent than I am. I nod silently. Well, it's not like I'm really wondering; I'm just a little curious. But anyway, since I'm here, I'll just find out what happened to this world's Nendou, and head back to my own world.

(I got rid of him.)

The Saiki Kusuo in front of me replies.

…I see…

It's just as I imagined. Nendou got interested in me, started calling me "partner" and invading my personal space without reading the room at all. Back when I first met him, I must admit that I was so sick of him, I also thought of getting rid of him at some point.



This world branched off from mine after I did in fact, get rid of Nendou. The Saiki Kusuo in front of me stares at me and raises his eyebrows.

(Did your expression grow gloomier just now? Why? Isn't it better if a guy like that isn't around? I'm sure I was right in doing so. That guy would only be trouble if I wanted to live a peaceful life where no one else knows I'm an esper and I don't stand out. Getting rid of him was right. I'm sure it wasn't a mistake, right? Besides, what was that "partner" thing about? How ridiculous. Living a high school life like that is no laughing matter. I want to live a peaceful life. Right?)

That's a fair argument. You're right… You're completely right…

(Then, why…?)

The other me, Saiki Kusuo, is starting to get angry.

(Then, why did "The Disastrous Life of Saiki K." get canceled on its tenth week of publication?!)

All the windows nearby shatter. Glass shards are falling, but I don't dodge. Fortunately, none of them cut me, and they all fall on the ground.

Did you just say… canceled…?

I'm completely dumbfounded. I got rid of Nendou, and we got canceled as a result…?

(That's right.)

No way… Then what happened to Asou? What is Asou doing right now? To be honest, I'm not even sure who Asou is in the first place, but for some reason I feel compelled to ask. I'm really concerned about him. Do you know anything? Don't tell me he's still at his part-time job…

Saiki Kusuo spits out his answer.

(That man moved onto another manga. Seems like it's so successful, it's getting an anime adaptation.)

Good for you, Asou. You're still alive. I don't even know who you are, but it's a relief to hear.

(Immediately after the cancellation of "The Disastrous Life of Saiki K." was announced, a reader poll was held, and the new series that would take its place was revealed. Its title is…)

I'm still unable to read Saiki Kusuo's thoughts. I don't know what he's going to say. However, I still have a feeling that I do. And in just an instant, I hear the answer.

(Mikami: Case Files)

I knew it.

(I'm no longer the main character…)

That's why Mikami had shown up and called himself the protagonist.

In other words, this is the world beyond Nendou's disappearance. A world where I got rid of him, and the series got canceled. The reason why I felt that my classmates took a wrong turn in life might be because of that. Everyone has taken a turn for the worse.

(Never mind that, why did we get canceled…? I don't get it…)

My other self says as he grabs his own head. It's strange for me to show any bare emotion like this. And I've never felt cornered like that. I know myself quite well.

(I wanted to get rid of Nendou so I could live an unremarkable life, and just think about coffee jelly for the rest of my days… I wanted to try homemade white coffee jelly, and then fight a manly guy with a mohawk over it using my psychic powers, and use my powers to grow coffee beans until one day we'd reach our final chapter and we could go into a deep slumber, closing a wonderful manga. Why would it get canceled?!)

No way.

I said that without thinking, but I meant that there's no way that Shonen Jump would ever serialize a manga like that.

Actually, I'm more surprised it even got published. Not only did he get rid of Nendou, but he also completely ignored Kaidou and Hairo… and that's how they got here. This Saiki Kusuo has a pretty one-track mind. I almost think it's kind of admirable. However, it makes sense this manga would get canceled…

(Why?! There was coffee jelly! And I'd be eating it! I'm sure you could market it as some therapeutic slice of life manga or something! It should sell! It had to sell!)

What's wrong with this Saiki Kusuo…?

The Saiki Kusuo from the popularity poll world also had very little in common with me back then or even now, but this Saiki Kusuo has gone through some bizarre changes. It's hard to accept, but maybe I'm more simple-minded than I thought… It's pretty embarrassing to watch.

This world's Saiki Kusuo seems to be saying something again…

(It's his fault. If only his pointless plans for the story had been a little more interesting…)

Guess it's time I take my leave.

Saiki Kusuo seems to calm down after hearing what I say.

(Huh? Ah, you're leaving? Yeah, I guess you'd want to go home after all. However—)

The next instant, Saiki Kusuo launches an aggressive explosion wave against me from the palm of his hand.

I take it head on, and I'm sent flying. My body crashes against the school building. Cracks start to spread through the wall. However, Saiki Kusuo isn't even hesitating. Using his psychokinesis, he keeps pushing me against it, until the wall eventually gives in. Part of the school building begins collapsing with a roaring sound. Steel beams and large concrete blocks fall on me. Once our surroundings start to go quiet again, and the wind disperses the cloud of dust that had formed, I'm taken aback by how calm everything seems to be.

Saiki Kusuo's telepathy breaks that silence.

(I called you here for a reason, so I'm not going to let you leave just like that.)

Still paralyzed while I try to process what just happened, I look up at a ray of sunlight coming through the debris.

My first thought is “I guess we’re going to stand out by making such a ruckus and destroying part of the school building.” However, Saiki Kusuo responds almost as if he could read my mind.

(Don’t worry. This world’s characters are all under my control. Not a single person is going to care, no matter how much we fight. Even if we tear down the entire school, if we erase the entire city, or if we destroy the entire world, no one will care. No, they won’t even notice…)

His telepathic voice rings in my ears.

I shove my hands forward, as if trying to get rid of it, slowly pushing the debris away from me, and stand up.

Geez, I know we’re the same person, but right now I’m a high school girl. You can’t be making entire buildings collapse on high school girls. Their clothes will get dirty.

Ah, my body? Of course I’m unhurt. Though I was a little startled.

So what was that just now, anyway?

I ask Saiki Kusuo as I wipe the dust off my uniform.

(Well, there’s no other way. I’m going to defeat you and become the main universe’s Saiki Kusuo. That’s why I made you come here. I’ll have you sleep in this world for the rest of your life…)

He says, and then puts up his hand once again. That’s psychokinesis. I do the same, and raise my hand. Two great invisible energies collide and cancel each other out.

I see. I knew everything had gone wrong in this world, but I never imagined even I would be in this state… To think I’m so desperate, I’d even target my own self from a parallel universe…

“If you meet your doppelganger, you’ll die!”

I’ve heard that urban legend before. I guess this is what they meant. Though I think I’ll pass on dying.

(Take this!)

Saiki Kusuo points his finger at me, and all the glass shards, debris and concrete start floating in the air around me. Then they all come flying at me like missiles.

I dodge them all with slight movements so fast a normal human wouldn't even be able to process them.

Good grief, when did this become a novelization of a battle manga?

Come to think of it, it was only recently that I had to fight many legendary Shonen Jump characters in another strange world. Though I guess this is more like fighting against your own character.

(TL Note: This is a reference to the fighting game J-Stars Victory VS, where players can battle using characters from various Shonen Jump manga, including Saiki.)

Fighting against yourself is particularly inconvenient. Not only does your opponent have your own powers, but they also know your combat habits, and they have a solid grasp of your technique. Which means—

(Just as I expected.)

Saiki Kusuo is waiting for me, knowing I was going to dodge. One of the shards comes flying straight for my torso. I can manage that. However, I didn't ignore the fact that Saiki Kusuo just took a kicking stance. A full-force kick is coming. At least that's what I'd do. Since I'm fighting myself, my intuition can more or less tell me what's coming. That's the silver lining.

Sorry for you, but I'll have to repeat your words.

Just as I expected.

In an instant, I feel his psychokinesis pushing me against the ground.

What…?!

(Pretending to go for a low kick… and then attacking from above!)

I get pushed to the ground, and start feeling genuine concern for the first time. He should be identical to me, but I seem to have misread him. I see. I can't read this Saiki Kusuo's thoughts. On the other hand, he can read mine.

Having to fight an opponent like that sure is troublesome…

It's almost like playing an impossible game.

I cancel his psychokinesis and stand back up. I have to take some distance but Saiki Kusuo won't just let me run away. He's getting closer to deal the final blow.

I'll freeze his feet. This should stop him.

However, he's well ahead of me.

He vanishes from the ground the instant I freeze it. It was too sudden. And then he appears behind me. That's fine, though.

(Got you!)

Saiki Kusuo goes for a killing cut with his bare hands, but I also vanish before he reaches me. And of course I move behind his back.

Take my secret "chop" technique.

I extend my fingers, aligning them sharply, preparing for a focused "chop" attack towards his neck.

What if this keeps going since we're both espers, and we keep endlessly teleporting behind each other's backs? I'm sure some readers are asking that same question. However, I want you to keep in mind that one of my weaknesses is that I can't use the same power consecutively. After using it, I have to wait at least three minutes. That's why I waited until he decided to teleport himself. Even if he can read my thoughts, he's still powerless right now. In fact, reading my thoughts right now might be even worse for him. Alright, are you ready? I'm sure it'll be fine if I release a ridiculous amount of power, since I'm fighting myself, right? Take this full-power "chop!"

(Yeah, using your full power makes the most sense.)

His voice comes from behind me. Saiki Kusuo vanished before my eyes.

He… teleported?!

He managed to replenish his energy within just a second?! I quickly turn my body around. In the corner of my field of vision, I catch a glimpse of Saiki Kusuo's face. My eyes widen in surprise.

This world's Saiki Kusuo… doesn't have his left hairpin limiter.

No way… don't tell me he removed it knowing he would fight me…

I instinctively move out of the way and dodge his "chop" attack. I see a rush of wind pass right in front of me, slightly scraping my nose. His attack keeps moving forward, splitting the ground, the school building, and all the houses in its way. Not only that, but it keeps moving until it eventually splits even the mountains in the background.

This is a full-power "chop."

If I hadn't dodged that, I would be dead meat.

Splitting even the mountains in the background isn't something you'd expect from a story set in a comedy manga.

No, I guess you can't even call this gag comedy anymore, considering right now I'm battling with my life on the line.

However, even considering how strong I am, taking a full-force attack like that would leave me in a sorry state. Gag comedy or not…

My face turns pale after seeing the destructive extent of a full-force "chop" attack. So this is how far an unlimited "chop" can go…

I created the limiters to prevent my ever-increasing powers from becoming too strong. If I take them off, I become several, tens, or hundred times stronger than I currently am. That's exactly why they're there.

For example, I could have the power to control the minds of everyone on earth, which is exactly why it needs to be restricted. However, the limiters just suppress my powers, they don't keep them from getting stronger.

Perhaps it's because I'm still in my teenage years, so they keep growing just like my own body. Even with the limiters on, my powers keep increasing year after year.

To be honest, I'm not even sure just how destructive my attacks could be without the limiters on.

However, I don't have a choice.

After seeing the destructive power of his "chop" attack, my only option left is to remove my limiters as well…!

(Too late.)

I see my own face in front of me. Saiki Kusuo managed to teleport without waiting a single second again. The eyes behind his green-tinted glasses have an unpleasant glint.

(Go to sleep.)

For some reason, Saiki Kusuo was now holding a toy in his hand… a baby's rattle. He starts shaking them and singing a lullaby.

The sound of the rattle and his singing starts echoing inside my brain. What's this surreal scenery…?

Suddenly I start to feel dizzy and I fall to my knees.

What?! What's going… on…?

My body feels heavy. My consciousness slowly gets foggy. I don't understand what's going on. My head's not working right. This isn't good. I can't stand up.

This isn't just a lullaby inside my head… what's… this ability?

(Geez, that's pretty embarrassing for me as well.)

Saiki Kusuo is looking down at me.

(I thought you'd give me more trouble than this boring fight. I really can't believe we're supposed to be the same person. Leaving your limiters aside, my psychic powers should be much stronger than that, right?)

I completely collapse as he keeps complaining dejectedly. I see Saiki Kusuo's shoes in front of me. I can't move my body. All I can do is watch.

(You've become weaker, haven't you?)

He asks, and then sighs.

(I'm sure you're just getting along with Nendou and Kaidou, right? Is that the reason?)

What… do you mean…?

(I see you've been holding back your own powers subconsciously. I don't exactly understand why, but I'd say you're generally only using your powers in extreme moderation to avoid harming those around you, right? What a stupid thing to do.)

My eyelids feel progressively heavier. I don't think I can even move a finger anymore.

(You couldn't even read my mind, and your own thoughts were leaking all over the place. Your psychokinesis has also been getting weaker. The only thing you could do was run away and defend yourself. Your reflexes are far too slow. What use do your powers even have?)

Saiki Kusuo keeps going. His telepathic voice is quietly echoing in my head.

(It's all because of your useless friends. Your abilities have weakened. However, that's where I'm different from you. I've always lived alone. I never hold back when using my powers. There's no need to do so in the first place. Why should I care about how those people feel? Why should a supreme being like me get along with his stupid classmates? I just want to live a quiet life. In which case, I should use all my powers to achieve it. It's pretty simple.)

He keeps repeating his own words inside my head over and over. That's right, it's just as the Saiki Kusuo in this world is saying. It's simple. I just want to live a quiet life, so this world's Saiki got rid of Nendou. I want to avoid standing out at school, so this world's Saiki kept ignoring Kaidou.

(There's no reason for me to walk the path of a normal human. What good would come from stooping down to their level? There's no way regular humans like them would be able to ever understand an esper like me.)

He's right… Saiki Kusuo's words are correct. But I don't know… for some reason, it also feels like they're wrong, even though I can't explain why.

I try to think despite my waning consciousness, but Saiki Kusuo's voice immediately drowns out my own thoughts.

(I was right. However, this world is all wrong. That's why—)

That's why… That's why… That's why… his words echo endlessly inside my head. This is bad… I can't think at all. I'm sleepy… Why do I feel so sleepy?

However, the next instant…

(I'll show everyone who the real esper Saiki Kusuo is. After I go to your world, that is.)

I hear that loud and clear.

His words tightly pull on my heart. I break into a cold sweat. However, I can't stand up to him anymore. I don't have any strength left. I can't even use my powers.

(We'll switch places. I'll become Saiki Kusuo. You'll stay in this world sleeping forever as Saiki Kusuko. Endlessly dreaming. You know how we can't use our powers in dreams? That's what I'm going to do. The only place I'd be able to capture myself is in dreams. If I had let you keep your abilities, who knows what you would've been capable of.)

I can't even open my eyes anymore. My vision gets narrower and narrower…

(You lost. And now you'll get to live your dreams, eternally in solitude as a loser.)

I can't… did I just… lose…?

There's no way. The moment I close my eyes, it's all over. That's right, he'll vanish if I undo my transformation. My transformation… I have to release it… and then… what would I do from then on in this world?

In this distorted world without Nendou, what would I do…?

(I'll become the main world's Saiki Kusuo!)

I hear those final words, before my consciousness slips into pure darkness.

The Disastrous Festival of Powerless Saiki Kusuo

My name is Saiki Kusuo, and I'm… not an esper.

That's right. I'm not an esper. I'm a regular person. Wait, what does that even mean? That almost makes it sound as if I hadn't been a regular person until recently. That's strange.

I'm just a person. I've always been one. I'm an average guy with no outstanding abilities. There's no way I'd have any in the first place. I just felt like I did for a moment right now, for some reason. That's embarrassing. Am I becoming a chuunibyou? Sometimes people my age still think they're different from others, and have some kind of special ability, but I'm sure I'll go back to normal after I calm down and analyze my situation…

No, but I really feel like I was using psychic powers and had morphed into a girl until just recently. Is it just my imagination…? I'm a guy, there's no way I could transform back and forth into a girl.

What does it even mean to "morph into a girl" in the first place anyway? Am I going insane…?

As I ponder that, I suddenly hear the sound of taiko and a Japanese flute.

I come back to reality, and I find myself in the middle of an ennichi festival. There are many people around me celebrating in yukatas, as well as food stands neatly decorated with lanterns that sway back and forth.

(TL Note: An "ennichi festival" is a type of Japanese festival dedicated to or related to a deity.)

It's still summer. I don't really remember how I got to this summer festival, though.

I stand all by myself surrounded by traditional sweet stands and people.

Why am I just standing still in a place like this…?

Ah, I remember now. I thought it was noisy outside, so I decided to go out and check what was going on. Good grief, how could I forget, when I just went out a few minutes ago…?

However, there's something off. I can feel there's something amiss, but I don't know what it is. I keep wondering about it, as I look at the lanterns shining in the dark night sky.

Just what's this indescribable sense of loss…? Maybe it's just puberty?

I feel like I just lost something very dear to me, and I forgot about it…

At the same time, I also feel an intense sense of déja vu. Why? I feel like I've been to this festival before. Did I… Did I see anyone at this festival? I don't think I came here to meet up with anyone in particular, but I get the feeling that I just bumped into them somehow. However, that makes no sense. I'm always alone. I don't have any close friends. Who could that mysterious someone be? This is bad. Am I actually becoming a full-fledged chuunibyou? I'm talking about some imaginary friends now? Why do my memories feel so vague? Did I bump my head or something…?

Families with children, couples, and groups of students pass by me as I stand there lost in thought. Everyone is smiling and having fun. That's right. What was I even thinking? Why am I worrying about something like that in a fun place like this?

I'm here already. Might as well have some fun after all.

I look at the stands, and start walking.

I can smell the scent of oil and fried foods. There's a stand that sells fried corn. There's also a grilled steak and yakisoba stand nearby. Sausages, squid, takoyaki and fried potatoes stands as well.

There are so many options, I don't think I will ever get sick of eating all these. I don't even know what I should get.

That's right, maybe I should try a shooting game or something instead of eating right now. Or maybe I'll try to get a fortune.

These types of games are where the real fun is in an ennichi Festival. There's also goldfish catching and balloon catching, and of course fishing as well. I'm sure I wouldn't be able to enjoy any of these if I had psychic powers.

When I was little, I remember my parents took me to a festival, and I used my powers at every one of these without holding back. Thinking back on it, I gave the shopkeepers a hard time. I'm sure by now I can control my

powers much better and perhaps just use half my total strength when playing…

No, wait, I'm not an esper. Why am I thinking about that?

However, I do remember catching every single goldfish they had… What even are these memories? Maybe I'm just embellishing them since I was pretty young back then. I'm sure I'm not the only one who does that, and I know there are also some people who have trouble telling dreams and reality apart sometimes.

However, I'm extremely average in every way. There's no way I'd ever be a master at catching goldfish or anything like that. It's especially unlikely I would manage to capture every single fish they had.

In that case I must've made up these memories at some point in my life…

But I do remember even the shopkeeper's expression when I caught every single goldfish. It feels so vivid, it's hard to think I actually made it up…

Everything feels hazy inside my head.

I guess it was a long time ago. It's not surprising the memories would be pretty vague.

More importantly, I should be enjoying the festival. Maybe I should get something to eat.

I look around the different stands, trying to figure out what I'm going to get. The colorful yukatas from the other shoppers around me catch my eye. Maybe I should've worn a yukata as well after all…

I suddenly think about that.

A shirt and denim pants… That's a pretty bland outfit, come to think of it. Maybe a yukata and some sandals would've been better. Walking around the festival being followed by the clacking sound of the sandals would be more appropriate. I could even get myself a kitsune mask. That traditional Japanese style is particularly good. And if I had a plastic bag with a goldfish in one hand, it would be perfect. That's my ideal summer festival experience. Especially since it's an ennichi festival. It's definitely not bad at all.

But I guess going back home and changing my clothes right now would be a bother… If only I could teleport, I wouldn't be worrying about something

so trivial. Though I still have to wait three minutes before teleporting again, so I wouldn't be able to come back immediately afterward. That's right, if only I were an esper, I could change my clothes freely whenever I pleased. Wait, can I just quit it with the esper thing already?!

What's going on…? Why do I keep coming back to the esper thing? What's with that "three-minute rule" anyway? Isn't it far too specific to come up with drawbacks for imaginary powers that I just came up with? Give me a break. At this rate I'm going to end up writing a "Dark History Notebook" in a few years, with all sorts of esper scenarios.

I shake my head as if to shake off my delusions. Regaining my composure, I start looking for some candy stands to treat myself to something sweet. Sweets from outdoor stalls are also pretty good.

I see a few children walking around with cotton candy in their hands. That's pretty standard for a summer festival. However, I guess the most standard option would be a cold ramune. There's also a bakery… Oh! And they're selling baby castella's! That's not bad at all!

But maybe I should get the chocolate banana first… No, no, a sweet apple! A banana covered in chocolate and colorful toppings and a sweet apple dripping in caramel.

I don't even know where to find either of those, though… What do I do?

I know! I'll just get both of them. Walking around with both in hand would be quite stylish.

Alright, the apples cost 300 yen each. I feel like they're trying to scam me here with those prices, but I guess it's fine. I take out my wallet and… and… Where's my wallet? Did I drop it?

I look around my feet, but it's nowhere to be found. And then—

"I don't have my wallet! Someone stole it!" someone nearby shouts.

Several people check their own pockets and realize their wallets are missing as well, which causes quite a commotion.

What a disaster… I can't believe they got me too…

I can't buy any apples without my wallet. And not only that, but I also can't buy any chocolate bananas or baby castella's either. I can't even buy next

week's Shonen Jump issue. I think that's about how much I had inside my wallet. Who would be so cruel to steal other people's money…?

I just stand in place, feeling incredibly frustrated.

I can't do anything. I'm just a powerless background character.

If only I could use my psychic powers…

If only I could do that, stupid incidents like this wouldn't keep happening. I don't want to keep thinking about this stuff, but I can't stop thinking about this fantasy, for some reason.

There's a version of me inside my head that does have psychic powers.

That's right, if only I did, I could catch whoever stole my money. Though I guess I still wouldn't be able to find them, since their thoughts would blend in with the rest of the crowd and I wouldn't be able to pick them up with my telepathy. That's why I should just find an abandoned bike or something, repair it until it has a value equal to my wallet, and then apport my wallet in exchange for the bike. That way I would get my wallet back in a second. That would settle the score for me, but we still shouldn't let criminals like that on the loose. We can't have people stealing others' wallets and ruining a fun time. I could use clairvoyance to quickly locate the culprit, who would likely be crushed under the bike that switched places with my wallet. I would go to them, and recover the wallets of other victims who were stolen from. However, I'm sure the culprits are no weaklings either. They probably have knives and they'd threaten me with them. As if a simple knife could hurt a real esper. In the blink of a second I would make them lose consciousness, tie them up, and call the police. I could return the wallets to the victims using my psychometry. Espers are able to do things like that without breaking a sweat. That way the entire problem would be resolved, and everyone could go back to enjoying the festival…

I can't believe I've been pondering something like that so seriously in silence.

That could never happen in reality, of course.

I know that. I know that better than anyone else. No matter how much I wish it happened, reality will never be like my daydreams. I'm not an esper.

That's why I'm sure I'll never get those wallets back. I can't find the culprits either. And even if I did, I'm sure I couldn't do it right now. And even if our police force was completely excellent, they wouldn't be able to

capture them in an instant like an esper could. I'll keep enjoying the festival to the best of my ability, ultimately be unable to buy anything, and go back home.

That's reality, after all. Espers are nothing more than fantasy… There's no espers around to help other people when things like these happen.

I really feel like an idiot. For a second I even thought that espers could be real…

"Wait! What are you doing, you bastard?! Give me back that wallet!"

I turn around to see whose voice that is. Two men are struggling nearby. One of them is a tough big guy wearing a Hawaiian shirt, and he's taking a wallet away from a guy wearing a cap. What's that? Is that a scene of crime? I stare in silence as the man with the cap hurries off in a panic. However, he's pushed down by a nearby officer.

Ah, he was the culprit.

Several wallets come out of the man's clothes, all the way down to his shoes. I thought the guy in the Hawaiian shirt was the culprit, but it seems like he was getting his stolen wallet back.

Among the pile of stolen wallets, I can see mine. A crowd starts gathering at the scene…

"Here you go."

I get my wallet back. I almost fall to the ground, surprised at the sudden interaction. I rapidly cling on to it. Why is this wallet that I was so sure had gotten stolen suddenly in front of me…?

"I saw him take your wallet, so I took it back," says the man in the Hawaiian shirt, pointing his finger at the man getting arrested by the police.

No way… does he mean he purposefully put himself in danger and chased the culprit just to get back my wallet…? Why would someone go that far for me…?

I take a look at this man. He's tall, well-built, and his Hawaiian shirt looks good on him. However, I can't get a good look at his face. Is my vision blurred? I blink, but his face remains dark, as if it were smeared with ink, making it difficult to see. There are so many lanterns around us, and lights

from the stands. It's so bright, it could be noon. So why can't I see his face? What's going on…?

"You should really check its contents. He might have taken everything out," the man says with a grin.

I stay quiet. No, I can't see his face, so there's no way I'd know he's smiling at all. I just got the feeling that he was.

I open the wallet and check its contents just like he said. The cash and cards are all inside. That's good.

"Are you okay? Good to hear! Huh? Wait a second, where's my wallet…?"

Did he steal yours too?

The officers have already arrested him. I guess they confiscated your wallet as well.

"Well, I guess it can't be helped. I already ate some takoyaki, and at least I got this wallet back, so I guess it's all good, eh? The takoyaki didn't have any octopus inside! Five out of six didn't have any octopus at all. And the last one only had a tiny and chewy piece. It was awful. I guess they forgot the *'tako'* and only gave me the *'yaki.*'"

What's with this guy? He just won't shut up. Besides, how can he just accept this outcome and move on? Just how unlucky is he?! Did he draw the worst fortune today?

"Eh? That's right, there's something I want to show you."

Why is this man acting so friendly toward me? He doesn't even know me, so why is he having so much fun talking to me? Of course I'm thankful he got my wallet back, but he sure is acting too friendly.

"What are you doing? Come on, let's go!"

The man grabs me by the arm. For some reason, instead of feeling surprised, I feel somewhat nostalgic. He carries me away, and I'm just completely speechless.

Just who is this guy? I wonder as I look at his back.

No matter how hard I think about it, I can't even remember his name. I can't remember his face either. Maybe I've just never met him before. This

must be the first time I've seen him. I guess that's the only explanation I can come up with.

That's right, I don't know this guy. There's no way someone would be so close to me anyway.

I've been living all alone my whole life, after all. I'm used to solitude. If anything, I prefer it. It's better if an average guy like me lives without standing out. I've been like that ever since I was young.

I can't handle crowds. I get tired easily whenever there's many people around. One of the main reasons why I don't walk in crowded areas is that I might physically bump into others. However, for some reason, I don't dislike festivals, but most of my life is spent at home or at school. I don't walk home from school with any friends either, and I prefer to not go to ramen places by myself. I guess you could say I'm a timid person.

I suddenly think of something… I feel like there was someone who also used to drag me around like this. Someone who lived an easygoing life, and could never read the room. Someone that used to butt into my lonely life and drag me around. I've thought that having someone like that around would be pretty fun. But that's just an idea. In the end, I'm alone. I'm not the type for socializing, and what I wish for will never become reality. It has always been this way.

However…

Right now I'm running around while this nameless, faceless person is dragging me along with him. We keep moving forward through the crowd. The lanterns light the way, and the shops on the sides feel like streetlights.

Am I dreaming? Is this even real?

We walk past the stands, and it suddenly gets darker. Next we start walking up the shrine's stairs. The crowds and the sweets all seem very distant.

I'm already out of breath, since we started running all of a sudden. An indoor type like me isn't really used to physical activity, unlike the man in front of me.

However, despite being panting already, I still keep up with him. I have to. I don't know why, but that's what I think. I cannot let this man go.

"We'll be there soon!"

The man says as he turns around. His face is so dark, I can't see it. The darkness around here doesn't help, although I don't think I know his face in the first place. I find myself thinking back to my psychic powers while we're still running.

If only I could make fireworks light up the night sky. Then I would be able to see his face…

But still, no matter how much I think about it, having psychic powers definitely sounds like a delusion…

I hear a loud bang, and a ring of colorful lights spreads through the sky. Everything turns bright for an instant.

No way.

"Eh?! I thought the fireworks started an hour later!" the man says, surprised. "Damn it, run!"

One after another, the fireworks keep illuminating the night sky.

I look at them in awe. He keeps dragging me with him, but I can only look at the sky. Was that a coincidence…? No, no way. That was…

"Here we are! What do you think? This is my special seat!"

We run past a small forest near the temple, until the man finally comes to a halt. You can see the wide sky being illuminated by the fireworks from here. There's not a soul around. This definitely is a "special seat."

"The fireworks look awesome from here!" the man says, and then laughs loudly. You'd think he was a rocket about to take off from his laugh. However, I'm feeling a little confused.

How long has it been since I've run this much? I'm bad at sports. My heart is racing and my lungs are desperate for air. I might not even make it to the end of the fireworks show.

I've never been this tired… tired? I'm… not tired…

My body doesn't feel tired in the slightest. In fact, I feel perfectly fine. I'm breathing normally as well.

Summer nights are still a little warm. However, I'm not sweating at all. In fact, I might start sweating just because of how strange that is.

It truly is strange. I feel like I might be able to do anything right now.

“Fireworks are fun, right? Everyone just looks at the sky…” the man says absentmindedly as he looks up.

“Every year, when I see these fireworks, I can’t help but think… I’d live my life like fireworks too. I want to become a man like that…”

What’s he even talking about? Does he mean he wants to live for a second and then die?

And then I get a strange feeling.

…What is this? Déja vu? I feel like this happened before…

The fireworks explode, and then the sky turns dark. I can’t see the man’s face even though he’s standing right next to me. I can’t see him.

I try to look at the tall man’s face, and right then, a colorful explosion lights up the sky.

“Don’t you think so, partner?”

Right at that instant, I can see the man’s face thanks to the fireworks.

All of a sudden, I hear people’s voices flowing into my mind. And I’m not going crazy.

This all feels incredibly natural. I can hear the thoughts of all the people attending the festival. I can hear one after the other, almost as if they were a fire spreading from one leaf to the next. That fire is like a light that surrounds me.

As we’re enveloped by the sound and light of the fireworks, every single person is looking up at the sky. No one is looking down. Fun, happiness, beauty… countless positive emotions flow into me like the fireworks, one after the other. I’m flooded by kind thoughts.

The only voice I can’t hear is that of the man standing beside me, just like always.

I can’t read his mind, even though I’m an esper. Because he’s an idiot.

However, it doesn’t matter if the world around me is real or just a dream. It doesn’t matter if I’m just a regular guy. You’ll still always call me your “partner…”

Nendou.

Chapter 4

The Disastrous Life of Saiki Kusuo: Extra Stories of Psychics

I open my eyes, and I see myself.

And it's not like looking in the mirror. That's my other self. My other self has his eyes wide open in astonishment. I can only tell because he's also me, but me making a surprised expression like that is especially unusual. It's quite a rare sight. I find myself lost in thought.

Alright then, why is Saiki Kusuo right in front of me?

I stand up and feel a strange flutter in my clothes. I'm wearing a sailor uniform.

A transformation…?

That's right, I'm Saiki Kusuko right now.

Only one Saiki Kusuo can exist in this world, so I transformed into Saiki Kusuko to call this world's Saiki Kusuo.

(It's impossible… there's no way…)

I hear Saiki Kusuo's shocked voice through telepathy.

(How did you come back…?! You can't use your powers in the dream world…!)

That's right. That's why this world's Saiki Kusuo trapped me in the dream world. His objective is to switch places with me. He wants to take over my original world.

However, even if he managed to become that world's Saiki Kusuo, if I somehow managed to return, he would vanish. That's why he decided to make me sleep for all eternity.

Come to think of it, he did pretty well in defeating me.

Though I don't think that's going to work twice.

Without changing my expression, I directly confront Saiki Kusuo. He is already back to his cool self, and has made the rattle appear once again.

(Fine… I can make you sleep again…)

As expected of me. That's what I'd like to say…

However, the rattle falls apart immediately. I did that with my powers, of course.

(Ugh… I guess the same trick won't work twice. In that case…)

Immediately, Saiki Kusuo makes a five yen coin attached to a string appear. However, they both ignite and burn to ashes in an instant. Of course I did that, too.

(Pyrokinesis, huh?)

How about attacking me directly instead of relying on some cheap toys? I taunt him with my index finger making a "bring it on" motion. Saiki Kusuo gets clearly annoyed, and right as he takes his first step, he disappears. He teleported. This world's Saiki Kusuo has already removed his limiters, so he can teleport just like that. On the other hand, I still have mine, so I have to wait three minutes after teleporting to teleport again.

In that case, does that mean I have to take my limiters off as well? No, that's not it.

Even if I did that, we'd just be stuck repeatedly teleporting. It would become an endless chase. We would never finish this, and this fight would go on forever. In order to go back to my old world, I need Saiki Kusuo's power. The only way would be to convince Saiki Kusuo.

In that case, how should I counter his teleportation?

If it's regular teleportation, then I'd have several counters. I'd just need to interrupt him for an instant. That would be enough.

I already know what I need to do.

This is a world that branched off after Nendou was eliminated. It's the result of me trying to live a quiet life without getting involved with anybody else. However, at the same time, that is exactly Saiki Kusuo's greatest weakness.

By the way, the reason I can think so extensively in a situation like this, even during combat, is because of the mind control I cast on the world when I was young. I rewrote human biology at the genetic level, enhancing the ability to think quickly in critical moments.

Nowadays, I wear my limiters to prevent my mind control from going haywire. But thanks to the change I made using mind control, I can

instantly think of countermeasures against Saiki Kusuo's attacks even though his limiters aren't removed. It's quite ironic.

It hasn't even been a second since Saiki Kusuo teleported before he instantly appears in front of me again. He wants to strike me with his psychokinesis from a close distance. That's just what I expected.

I take a step backwards and immediately widen the gap between us. With this, Saiki Kusuo will probably teleport behind me and attack. I'm not going to let him.

To be honest, I've already used my telepathy to call for reinforcements. I'm not sure if he's going to show up, but this is my only option, considering Saiki Kusuo's murderous intent. I think that this man will show up if I call out to him even in this world. In fact, he's already here.

By the way, other me. Can you see him?

I say, and suddenly the man appears right in front of Saiki Kusuo, who just teleported an instant ago.

He's wearing a white triangle on his forehead and he's wrapped in burial robes. He looks like a ghost for sure. And he's also someone that used to live in this world.

He decided to appear right in front of Saiki Kusuo.

(Nendou…?! It can't be… I got rid of you…)

Saiki Kusuo's expression stiffens. And then, due to the surprise, his movement momentarily stops.

Despite being a brief moment, there is an opportunity to strike. And that moment is sufficient.

I open my eyes wide, and Saiki Kusuo collapses on the floor as if struck. Cracks extend through the floor surrounding Saiki Kusuo. I pin him down with my psychokinesis.

(Wh-What was that ghost thing just now…?! An illusion?!)

I respond to Saiki Kusuo, who is struggling to get up. His voice is filled with astonishment.

That's not Nendou, but his father. He's already dead.

(Father…?! Why does he look the same?!)

His mom also has the same face.

(That's impossible!! I understand father and son being lookalikes, but his wife as well?!)

That's what's scary about the Nendou family. By the way, his mom has two scars that run above each of her eyes.

(You're lying!)

You won't believe me? Well, I get it. I'd have the same reaction if I were you.

(I'm sure he just didn't know how to draw them differently. It's pretty obvious.)

Oh, you better stop talking, or I won't have any mercy on you.

I use my powers to close Saiki Kusuo's mouth shut. However, it's not surprising at all that he's this shocked. Even someone with powers close to omnipotent like me would be shocked if that face suddenly appeared in front of me.

Nendou and his dad look so similar, you might as well call them doppelgangers. The only noticeable differences are that their scars on their eyes are inverted, and his dad tends to say "Hah?" instead of "Eh?" They're so similar you wouldn't tell them apart at a first sight, but his dad is a ghost. That's why he can levitate and go through walls, and do other ghost-like things only possible to espers like me. Not to mention that I'm not a medium, so normally I can't see any ghosts, but sometimes I'll be able to see this man, for some reason. According to Toritsuka, all ghosts are nice people, but that's ridiculous. This spirit that decided to start following me around all the time might as well be a curse.

Good grief, I don't even know what to do with the Nendou family anymore…

However, this time he's been quite useful.

This world's Saiki Kusuo found Nendou extremely annoying when he first met him, and so he got rid of him. Which means that he didn't get to know Nendou at all, and as a consequence, he also didn't get to know his father.

We have the same face, the same voice and the same powers… but there's one single difference between this world's Saiki Kusuo and me. And that's our experiences so far.

And that's precisely this world's Saiki Kusuo's greatest weakness.

(Wait a second… does that mean he's a real… ghost…?!)

Saiki Kusuo looks at me in confusion. That's right. You didn't get along with Kaidou or Hairo after erasing Nendou. Which means you also didn't meet Toritsuka.

(There's no way ghosts are real. That's illogical. Psychic powers exist, but ghosts don't. That's how this world works, right? No, however, what did I see earlier…?)

Saiki Kusuo can't hide his shock anymore. I was quite surprised the first time I saw ghosts as well. However, unfortunately for you, both ghosts and spirit mediums exist in this world. I'm really sorry about that.

(No way… Spirit mediums too?! The ones that go "ha!" and channel ghosts? Don't tell me I'll have to battle one of those?!)

You won't, and don't worry, you could kill him easily.

By the way, while I'm telepathically speaking with Saiki Kusuo, Nendou's dad is just floating and looking around. And then he speaks with a questioning tone.

"This is pretty weird. I feel like I was summoned here somehow… was it just my imagination? Hah?" he says while ignoring us, and then leaves.

That's right. This world's Nendou's dad doesn't know who I am. He probably doesn't realize I summoned him with my powers. Nevertheless, it seems that he still wanders off and leaves Toritsuka unprotected, just like always.

Alright, thanks to Nendou's dad I've managed to push back against this world's Saiki Kusuo, but what should I do next…? I stare coldly at him lying on the ground.

(What's with that expression?! I know it because we're the same. This is bad…! Whenever I make that expression things go south really badly…! I almost never look like that!)

Saiki Kusuo attempts to free himself from my psychokinesis. However, I just push down on him even harder. I won't let him leave, and I won't let him teleport.

(Damn it! Why can't I cancel it?! What are you going to do?!)

Ha ha, I wonder about that.

You made me feel pain, locked me in a dream world, and tried to take over my world… Can't you figure it out, since we're the same? What would you do if I'd done the same to you? Maybe for starters, I'll have you grovel and lick my shoes.

I look down at him with a smirk. Saiki Kusuo replies immediately.

(I refuse. You may be me, but I will never lick a high school girl's shoes. No way.)

I see. Alright, then I'll just fuse you with the ground.

(Alright! I lose. Calm down, let's talk. Let's be friends. We're the same, aren't we?)

Saiki Kusuo immediately admits his defeat. While fighting, we're able to read each other's next move and counter each other easily, so speaking like this makes things simpler. There's no need for pleasantries. Just reading each other's expression and tone is enough to know what the other's feeling. I think the other me in front of me has also realized that's the simplest solution. Good grief, I'm glad we can finally talk things through peacefully.

(I admit I lost, so can you free me already?)

Aren't you just going to teleport behind me and attack me with a "chop" the moment I free you?

(*I don't know what you're talking about.*)

So you were. As expected of me, I can't lower my guard for a second. You're going to stay restrained.

(Wait a second. I really admit I lost. I'm not going to do anything anymore. Please let me go.)

Seems like you've surrendered for real. I can let you go.

I snap my fingers, and Saiki Kusuo is set free. He stands up, shakes the dust off his clothes, and looks at me.

(Besides, even if we had kept fighting, I knew I wasn't going to win. Not without knowing more about Nendou's dad and Tori-whatever the medium.)

Saiki Kusuo laughs bitterly.

(Do you know the "three responsibilities of a good citizen?")

What's this all of a sudden? Aren't they "education," "labor" and "taxation?"

(That's right. "Friendship," "effort" and "victory.")

That's the Weekly Shonen Jump.

(I'm lacking in all three of those. I realized that while I was fighting against you.)

You're turning around? Are you going to keep talking like that?

Saiki Kusuo speaks as he stares off into the distance.

(Memories with your friends… your bond with the Nendou family… I don't have that while you do. That's how you defeated me. The power of friendship, right?)

Saiki Kusuo grins, showing his shiny white teeth and gives me a thumbs up.

Let me say this again, but what's up with this Saiki Kusuo? The me in the popularity poll world was like this as well. Are all my parallel versions this way?

(The power of friendship created a miracle…? That's how you returned from my dream world as well. Because you're an esper. Miracles aren't an abnormality for you…)

Don't just convince yourself. And please stop calling my relationship with the Nendou family a bond. It's not like that, for real. And it wasn't the power of friendship either. What the hell are you even talking about?

It was the sweet apple. That's right, I came back after getting too angry for not being able to eat a sweet apple. Besides, it's not like coming back from the dream world was particularly difficult. It's definitely not a miracle. I could do it easily. Nendou had nothing to do with it.

(Be as it may, it seems that even if I went to your world… to the main world, nothing good would come of it. I'll have to figure out how I'm going to live on from now on in my own world…)

Saiki Kusuo says and then he looks up at the sky. His expression is all sparkly. However…

"I don't think I can let that be the end of it…"

A heavy voice echoes around us.

Saiki Kusuo and I look in its direction, and see a middle-aged man trudging along toward us.

His face is round, he's wearing glasses and he looks kind.

Why is he here…?!

I couldn't believe my eyes after seeing who showed up.

It's this school's… PK Academy's principal.

I look at him as he smiles at us. Although his outfit is a little plain, he's wearing an expensive necktie, and although his hairline is receding, it's still pitch black. He's the principal for sure.

Unlike all of my classmates I've met in this world, or the humans in my world who look quite extravagant, this man looks like a regular middle-aged man.

Why did the principal show up? I'm sure some of our readers are wondering why the principal would decide to appear during this novel's climax. He's extremely out of place.

However, at the same time, the words of Mikami Mei and the disappearance of PK Academy's principal come to mind.

Isn't this world's principal supposed to be missing right now? Is the person in front of us the same principal that went missing?

What's going on? Is he involved in this…?

The principal says, "That won't do, Saiki-kun…"

He speaks with a calm expression on his face. Apparently he's not talking to me, but to the other me.

"A plan is a plan until it's completed. You can't just give up halfway, you know." the principal says, adapting one of those classic field trip quotes.

What's this "plan," anyway?

Saiki Kusuo answers my question.

(The principal gave me the idea to bring you here and switch places…)

The principal…?

(That's right. When we got cancelled, I went on a negative rampage, and could only wish to become a seaweed. That's when that man, the principal, appeared in front of me… He said to me "You! Pull a switcheroo!")

Isn't that different from the principal's usual character?

(However, I realized as we were fighting… I don't want to be someone else… I want to change. I want to change who I am, and become stronger and kinder!)

Aren't you also different from your usual character?

The principal then speaks up.

"Strength and 'kindness' alone aren't enough! You're lacking courage!"

I misread the principal's character?!

As I'm in awe, the principal is losing his mind. His calm demeanor until recently completely disappears, and his voice changes as well. He doesn't seem like a school principal.

"You can't become a hero if you're not courageous, you idiot!"

There's clearly something wrong with the principal. Besides, that line… I get the feeling that I've heard it before somehow. A certain sense of déja vu.

“Listen carefully, you two. The important things for a hero are kindness, strength…” The principal continues, counting on his fingers. “…And kindness! You better keep that in your head, you fools!”

Where did “courage” go?

This principal in front of me has to be a fake. That’s clearly because I know who this man really is. I recall a man who would stand up and preach about heroes and other nonsense. But it can’t be…

(By the way, other me. Did you notice…?)

Saiki Kusuo asks me. What do you mean? I’ve only noticed that I can’t hear his thoughts, and my x-ray vision shows nothing either.

That’s right, the principal’s body is completely black on the inside, and I can’t see anything. And it’s not just a regular black color. It looks almost like a black hole. A pitch-black shadow is revolving inside this man.

(He’s been like that ever since he told me his plan…)

And you followed the plans of someone like that?

(It was because I was on a rampage. I thought that I’d be able to use my powers to do whatever I wanted, even if the principal was up to no good. I was out of my mind back then…)

So he swindled me when I was feeling completely cornered? This parallel world is truly in a dire state.

Alright, now what…? Huh? He’s here…

I contacted someone using my telepathy. I’m sure we’ll be able to solve the mystery behind the principal now.

“Please wait… this principal is a fake!”

Good grief, the protagonist finally decided to show up.

The one smoothly pointing his index finger at the principal is none other than private detective Mikami Mei.

“Ha ha, Saiki-kun. I’ve found the culprit responsible for the ‘Missing Principal of PK Academy’ case.”

He walks forward step by step as he bites on his pipe. The eyes below the shadow of his cap have the same glint as those of a predator chasing its prey.

(Incident…? What does he mean?)

Saiki Kusuo turns his head in confusion.

Mikami is speaking to this world's Saiki Kusuo. However, I was the one that Mikami spoke with earlier in the classroom, before I had transformed. It's understandable that the other Saiki Kusuo is confused, so I use my telepathy to share all the information and experiences I've had in this world with him.

"Huh? I haven't seen you around before, young lady."

Why are you focusing on that? Explain the case already.

Mikami keeps looking at me without changing his expression. Apparently even a private detective can't conceive the idea of someone using their psychic abilities to transform into someone else.

"Ah, I see. You used your psychic powers to transform?"

How did you know?!

"Because I'm a detective *(and the main character is always right)*…"

Mikami then clears his throat and points his finger back at the principal.

"That's right, and you're also pretending to be someone else!" he says and then his mouth twists into a smirk.

"This case's culprit, the fake principal, is in reality… you, right? '*Our Hero Studies'* main character: Haganeno-sensei!"

"Th-That's impossible…! How do you know my name…?!" the fake principal named Haganeno stumbles.

"What are you talking about? Of course I'd know it. We were released together as cancelled series in Volume 0!"

"Damn it! You're right, come to think of it!"

“I’ve already rescued the real principal, who was being held in the storeroom beneath the gymnasium’s stage, where they store folding chairs. Give up already!”

Wait, isn’t that far too cruel to the real principal? At least come up with a better place for him.

“Ha ha ha… As expected of a famed detective…”

The fake principal called Haganeno laughs silently.

“I overlooked Volume 0. The story published was a spin-off, so I lowered my guard. I can’t believe you’d figure out my true identity just from that bit of information… You’re good.”

I get the feeling that many readers already had a vague idea, but let’s leave that aside for now.

“However, now that you’ve found out my real identity… that’s the more reason to not let you go…!”

The fake principal, Haganeno, shows us his true form. He takes off his principal bodysuit (wait, it was a bodysuit?) and a young man dressed like a video game hero appears. There’s a sword straight out of a video game and a cape on his back. I remember seeing this man before.

You’re the suspicious guy that was walking around the neighborhood!

This is referring to the beginning of the first novel.

I was walking to school like usual, when I saw some suspicious guy being questioned by the police. At that time I just let it go as some random cosplayer who looked suspicious, but I never imagined that it was Haganeno.

Haganeno, did you impersonate the principal and manipulate this world's me? Why?

"Allow me to explain my theory about that."

Mikami explains the surprising revelation.

"This is the truth behind the case of the 'Missing Principal of PK Academy: Round 2!'"

Round 2? How many times is the principal going to get kidnapped? What is he, a damsel in distress?

"Haganeno-sensei… you infiltrated this school and impersonated this principal, so you had to murder him to do that. However, murder was too low even for you. You thought back to your own mother in the countryside. And so you decided that instead of murdering him, you'd make him disappear in order to execute your evil crime. You stowed away the real principal in the storeroom beneath the gymnasium's stage. The folding chairs in that room are only used during ceremonies like the entrance ceremony, so people only go there a few times a year at most. You took advantage of that. By storing away the principal and assuming his identity, you would be the one conducting the ceremonies. Who would suspect anything? Yes, the principal himself—the true principal—was replaced by you. By enduring the ordeal of arranging the folding chairs alone overnight a few times a year, the real principal remained undiscovered… A truly well-executed trick."

"Huh? What the hell are you talking about?"

Haganeno looks confused. Seems like Mikami was wrong.

However, Mikami doesn't falter.

"Haganeno-sensei, you wanted to introduce a 'Hero Studies' course in PK Academy. In order to do that, you had to become the principal to do just as you pleased… Am I wrong?"

"You are! I wanted to make the two Saiki Kusuo versions fight each other, infiltrate in the midst of the chaos, and turn this novel into a Hero Novel! That's why I turned into the principal and had Saiki come here! Ha ha ha! You all couldn't see past this perfect plan!"

"I knew it… It's just as I thought."

A fearless smile appears on Mikami's face as he points his finger at Haganeno.

"Haganeno-sensei, you tried to take over this novelization!"

"Wh-What?! How did you figure it out?!"

What's this farce?

Mikami nods satisfied at a completely perplexed Haganeno, who can't understand how he figured out his plan.

"The culprit is Haganeno-sensei. The motive is clear. All mysteries have been resolved. Well then, I shall take my leave…"

Mikami turns around, waving his trenchcoat in the air.

And with this, the unpleasant incident finally comes to a close…

"Mikami: Case Files" The End

(Wait a second. We still haven't solved the biggest mystery yet.)

Saiki Kusuo mutters to himself.

Good grief, Mikami just left without solving an essential mystery.

We watch Mikami walk away as Haganeno yells in frustration.

"Damn it! How did they figure it out?!"

You sold yourself out.

I look at a completely astonished Haganeno.

"Our Hero Studies." A manga like that existed long ago. It was relatively famous, even though its author got the name wrong and said *"My Hero Studies"* sometimes. It was *"Our."* Make sure you all get it right.

And that man, Haganeno Ken, was its main character.

However, why did this man suddenly appear in the world of *"The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.?"* That mystery hasn't been solved yet. Mikami is probably just here because it's an alternative world line. But why did the *"Our Hero Studies"* main character appear both in the original and in this world?

I don't understand. That's the biggest mystery in this entire incident.

Moreover, not only is it unclear why he's here, but it's also unclear how he even became a teacher in the first place. What a weird guy…

Come to think of it, I fought this octopus-shaped creature in Iruma City, and that was a teacher as well. Geez, why are all the teachers in my life a bunch of weirdos?

"Why am I here? Fine, I'll tell you!" Haganeno says with a smile. Though I guess it's a twisted smile more fitting of a demon king.

"Do you know the energy called 'sight?'"

I don't know that word. Though I think I've seen "PSI" used before.

I look at this world's Saiki Kusuo, who shakes his head as well.

"You don't know it, huh? Then allow me to explain! 'sight' is an energy that is born out of a feeling of distress of this world's supreme observers. To put it simply, it's an energy transferred from the reader's brain to the book the moment they get the feeling that something's off."

Huh. I see. I don't understand a thing.

"It's energy that exists in a completely different dimension from psychic powers. I'm sure it must be hard to conceptualize. A full explanation of 'sight' energy would be too complicated, so for now, allow me to answer why I'm here in the first place. Novelizations are worlds that overlap with the main story while having slight deviations. As the novelization progressed, this world has been shifting off-axis little by little. I used 'sight' energy to infiltrate this novel and come to this world. Though I was caught and questioned by the police immediately. It's been a year since then, and I finally got out."

This newly serialized story's protagonist just admitted that he's been arrested by the police. Is everyone alright with that?

“That’s right, didn’t you notice the numerous characters and references from Asou’s other works that appeared in the novelizations? They were part of a ritual of sorts. I used the ‘sight’ energy to make the boundaries between universes hazy. And then put all of those worlds together once I had gathered enough energy. There might be characters from all sorts of universes hiding in plain sight everywhere!” he says and then laughs maniacally.

“And that’s the power of ‘sight’ energy!”

Haganeno grabs some chains off the floor. At the other end, there’s a spiky wrecking ball. We look at it and take a fighting stance.

Where was he hiding a weapon that huge in the first place? Not to mention neither Saiki Kusuo nor I could foresee that he’d be fighting us with a weapon.

“I’ve summoned a weapon from my world. Justice Iron Tornado Ball!”

He raises his voice, and then starts waving the giant steel ball over his head.

Justice Iron Tornado Ball is a weapon that Haganeno uses in *“Our Hero Studies.”*

This giant amount of energy that makes the boundaries between worlds hazy also allowed him to summon his weapon with ease. That’s troublesome.

“Ha ha ha! Dieee!! You pieces of trash!!”

Haganeno throws his steel ball at us while shouting a very non-heroic line.

An unknown weapon in an unknown world. Things will get even worse if he starts pulling out even more weapons from his world. Well, I guess I could stop this steel ball with just one finger, though. I point my index finger at the mass of steel flying at us. I’m not worried about my finger at all, of course. The moment it’s about to touch the steel ball, it stops midair.

(Actually, we can stop it without even touching it.)

Says Saiki Kusuo standing beside me as he uses his psychokinesis.

Well, you’re right.

Saying that, I lightly tap the giant iron ball that is still floating midair in front of me. And just like that, the giant iron ball returns right to Haganeno with aggressive speed.

But, sometimes it's good to move once in a while, or else your body will become sluggish, right?

I say with a slight smile.

"Ouuuch! The spikes hurt!!" screams Haganeno in pain, taking the blunt strike of the steel ball. However…

"That hurts, you bastards! What do you think you're doing?!"

His wounds start healing immediately. What a lively guy.

"Ugh, I knew I had no chance against an esper on my own…" spits out Haganeno.

"Weapons aren't enough. I need more people."

Don't tell me you can even summon people from your world…?!

"Precisely! Come over, characters from '*Our Hero Studies!*"'

He opens his arms and smirks.

Suddenly, the air behind Haganeno starts getting distorted, and from the distortion, a beam of light I had never seen before appears. Ripples start spreading in a circular pattern, and then out of nowhere, an entire city appears in front of me.

"I'm connecting both worlds! This is the power of 'sight!'"

Dark clouds start forming around Haganeno. Our surroundings get dark as night, and we're enveloped in an unpleasant aura. An ominous wind starts blowing.

"He he he he he!! Rejoice as the characters from *'Our Hero Studies'* start pouring into this world! This world will soon be overtaken by *'Our Hero Studies!'* And then Saiki Kusuo will be no more than an extra character! Will he be able to survive until the end? Who knows?! This is Asou's All-Star Battle to the death!" Haganeno announces loudly as his cape flutters in the ominous wind.

“Ha ha ha… And it’s not just this novelization… I’ll take over the volumes and eventually chapters in the Weekly Shonen Jump as well! Next week’s issue won’t have *‘The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.’* in it, but ‘*My Hero Studies!”*”

Watch the title!

Haganeno laughs loudly without noticing he got the name of his own series wrong. I guess he has internalized the mistake, despite me emphasizing that it should be “*Our.”*

“Let me teach you a lesson, you serialized Jump bastards! I’m back!!”

The world keeps distorting due to the power of “sight.” The rumble everywhere gets even louder and snappier.

What a disaster. Haganeno has a strong final boss vibe to him. I don’t think I’ve ever met someone like that so far. Is it really okay for a protagonist like him to become a final boss in the first place? Aren’t you treating your protagonists too harshly?

“Mwahahaha… Mwahahahaha!! Eh? ….Huh?”

Haganeno turns around to check the world’s distortion. Everything’s distorted and rumbling, but no one’s coming over. Eventually even the sound effects stop altogether. It’s quiet.

The first one to break the silence with a deafening scream is Haganeno himself.

“What?! Why isn’t anybody coming over?! Why?! Come!”

Haganeno starts punching the distortion like someone who’s trying to punch a broken TV back in shape. The surface ripples along. Wait, you can just touch it like normal?

Haganeno starts bickering, clearly frustrated.

“Damn it! Why isn’t anyone showing up?! Why?! What happened to Buffalo Crap Island?! And Shigeru-kun the doll?! What about the guy with the beat board?! Show up already!!”

I don’t really get it, but he seems to be calling for some strange people. He didn’t even call the last guy by his name, so I guess that’s how important

of a character he is. If the recollection of the *"Our Hero Stories"* readers is correct, his choices were a big gamble.

"This is bullshit! Come on out already! I'll break your damn teeth!!"

Haganeno starts kicking the world's distortion. More importantly, what even is that distortion in the first place? It's behaving like some stolen front door you'd find on the black market.

As this clearly demonstrates, this man has no friends whatsoever.

And then finally someone shows up beyond the rippling surface.

"No one in Asou's world supports your plan, man."

A young man's shadow says from the other side. He seems to be young.

"Huh?! What did you just say? I'll drag you here and kill you!"

Haganeno starts blurting out lines more fitted for a random bad-guy extra.

The shadow eventually comes into full view. It really was a young man. He's a high school student… no, probably a college student. His hair is long and stretches to his shoulders, his face is clean and there's a cross-shaped pendant hanging over his neck. He's dressed like a visual kei fan. An outfit like that would look off on a regular person, but his slender and fit body makes it look quite cool. His eyes are a little rough, but he's still a man you'd call good-looking. I could believe it if you told me he's an idol.

(TL Note: Visual kei is a Japanese music subculture characterized by its eccentric and flamboyant style. The artists and fans typically wear elaborate makeup and have vibrant hairstyles.)

The man introduces himself.

"Hmph… My name is Ruchi. I'm a super idol in the *'Shinseiki Idol Densetsu: Kanata Seven Change'* universe."

He raises his hand and gives a friendly smile.

However, now taking another look as an outsider… We have a hero, an idol, an esper, and universal chaos. Not to mention that I'm currently in my female form.

“I’ve come here because I won’t let you do as you please, Haganeno!” he says, and then strikes a clearly planned pose. Good grief… first Haganeno and now this guy.

As the protagonist of *Kanata’s* world, I won’t forgive you for attempting to take over Saiki’s world!

You liar. What about the guy actually named “Kanata?”

By the way, these are his thoughts as he says that line.

(A world of heroes? You must be kidding me. I’ll use the power of ‘sight’ to turn this world into one that adores me… Ha ha ha…)

Ruchi is this kind of backhanded guy. He puts up a friendly face for his fans and comrades, but behind closed doors he’s a selfish and self-indulgent person. Besides, I hear that he got fired by his manager recently, so he’s more of a former idol.

Haganeno shouts aggressively at Ruchi, “Don’t get involved, you brat! Who even are you?! Where did you come from?!”

However, Ruchi responds calmly.

“Hm! Allow me to introduce myself again… I am Ru—”

“Shut up!”

Haganeno kicks Ruchi in the face, and so Asou’s All-Star Battle begins. However, it ends immediately. Ruchi collapses back into the distortion with a shriek. I said he was a backhanded guy, but it seems like he isn’t going to be back, since he couldn’t even defeat Haganeno…

He got fired by his manager, and he probably only showed up because he was the most desperate out of Asou’s character roster. As a neutral party to all of this, how characteristic of him. Well, I guess he still cares about his fans, and he’s kind of a good guy with a strong will, so in the end I think we might see him again. Maybe.

“Huff… huff… damn it… no one respects me…” Haganeno mutters, enraged and out of breath. The distortion then vanishes right in front of him, without even making a sound.

“Huh…?”

Haganeno opens his mouth in disbelief.

At some point the dark clouds dissipated, and turned into a blue sky. The ominous wind also disappeared. The sunlight shines and little birds are singing. It's a scenery straight out of a picture.

Haganeno turns pale.

"Huh? Wait… No way…? No… All the 'sight' I gathered for a year… there's no way it's all gone just because of dealing with that guy… right…?"

Seems like you've used up all your "sight." Haganeno collapses on the floor. He can't summon any weapons or people. He seems distraught and astonished.

"Nobody showed up and I used up all my 'sight.' This sucks! Damn it! Damn you Saiki! I wanted to be a part of J-Stars Victory VS as well!!"

Seems like he can't accept reality. Haganeno grabs his head and screams.

"Damn it! At this rate everyone will forget about *'Our Hero Studies'*… Everyone will forget about me…" Haganeno shrieks in anguish. I see, so that's why you wanted to take over.

"Waaahh!! Why won't you people buy any of the six *'Our Hero Studies'* volumes from the Jump Book Store, available on desktop, mobile and tablet, where you can read your favorite manga 24/7?! Buy them! Read them!!"

Stop it. We're not doing blatant product placement right now.

Actually, that's so blatant, I would just call it downright marketing.

I quietly speak to Haganeno.

Haganeno, you came here because you didn't want to be forgotten, right? Aren't you contradicting yourself?

"Huh? Contradicting…?"

You said you used "sight" energy to come here, right? And that power of "sight," though I don't really understand it, essentially means you're receiving energy from the readers, doesn't it?

“Yeah, exactly. But what does that have to do with anything?”

Weren’t you able to come here in the first place precisely because people still remember you?

I say, and then Haganeno falls quiet.

“No, that’s… that’s just… you know…”

Haganeno nods meekly.

“You’re right… If nobody remembered me, I wouldn’t have been able to appear like this. Huh? Wait… then that means that I don’t have to take over at all? In fact, why did I even do this in the first place?”

What a troublesome guy. That’s what I’d like to know.

“Actually, I should probably go back to my own world. Sorry for the trouble, Saiki.” Haganeno replies, smiling.

What a self-centered guy. By the way, how do you plan to get home?

I ask Haganeno as he stands up. He answers with a chuckle.

“Going back normally is… impossible…”

Haganeno turns pale and collapses on the ground yet again.

“This is bad… without my ‘sight’ I can’t connect this world to my own world and go back…”

Haganeno mutters in a dazed state.

“That’s right. In that case, I have no choice but to become a teacher in this world…!”

(Give me a break. Why has it come to this?)

This world’s Saiki speaks up.

“I can’t do anything about it! I can’t go back! I guess it’s fine. We can get along as a hero, a detective and two espers, and of course as Asou’s characters!”

That's a completely unexpected line from someone who was speaking about Asou's All-Star Battle to the death just a little earlier. What a lively guy.

Of course, this world's Saiki Kusuo remains silent.

(This is no joke. I want to live a quiet life. Why do I have to be surrounded by heroes and detectives? That's impossible.)

"Hey, hey, anything can happen in another world, you know? For example, there might be a world out there where I'm not a teacher, but prime minister. In that case, it wouldn't be strange for there to exist a world where espers and detectives follow a 'Hero Studies' course under my teaching to become heroes."

(A world like that can't exist. Go home already.)

"I just told you I can't go back even if I wanted to!"

Go back, don't go back. This exchange between the two of them keeps going. Good grief, I can't bear the idea of leaving this parallel world in this state.

I make a suggestion to Saiki Kusuo.

(…We can do that?)

Saiki Kusuo's expression changes slightly in surprise.

Of course we can. We're both espers, and there are two versions of Saiki Kusuo right here.

(You're right… Let's give it a try)

Alright, let's use our "PSI" instead of "sight…" Let's do this.

We both open our eyes wide. Saiki Kusuo and I open our arms and combine our powers. This is a power that can connect one world with another. We can create a distortion just like Haganeno did with "sight" earlier. Of course, I've never done this before, and I wouldn't be able to do it normally, even without my limiter.

If I were alone, that is.

However, right now I have me by my side. An esper, Saiki Kusuo. The most reliable person there is. I'm sure we can make the impossible possible together.

Saiki Kusuo and I create a pale blue energy that begins floating in the air, just like the distortion from earlier.

Hurry up. It won't last long.

“Thank you! Espers sure are incredible.”

Haganeno jumps into the distortion. His figure ripples just like water and gets swallowed into it.

Saiki Kusuo and I watch him leave.

His cape fluttering and the sword on his back really make him look like a hero. His figure blends in with the sunlight and starts to become vague. Haganeno turns around.

“That’s right. You like games, don’t you Saiki? You should come to my world and we could play some if you’d like. I have the latest sci-fi—no, PSI-fi games in the same room as always,” he says with a smile. And so, Haganeno’s figure vanishes.

The distortion disappears at the same time. He barely made it.

I feel a slight loneliness just like after the summer festival. I look at the blue sky. There’s no more “sight” energy, and Haganeno has returned to his own world. Everyone has gone back to their respective worlds. We’ve now solved everything.

(Not everything. We still haven’t solved us.)

Oh, you’re right. I have to go back to my regular world.

Saiki talks to me with telepathy, and I reply in the same way. I’m already used to having completely telepathic conversations with him. However, that will soon come to an end. Just like Haganeno, I have to go back to my original world…

And then…

I tell Saiki Kusuo about my desire to go back, and he agrees. I’m then surrounded by a light.

This light is similar to “sight” energy. We need a large amount of energy to go to another world, after all.

(Seems like my story can’t get started without Nendou.)

Saiki Kusuo contemplates.

(That’s why I’ll try to bring him back.)

He says just as I'm about to leave. You'll try to bring Nendou back? But he's an idiot, and he can never read the room, and his face looks rough, and he's an idiot, and he's stupidly tall, and he's an idiot and really annoying!

Besides, this world's Nendou is already…

Saiki Kusuo smiles faintly.

(I said I got rid of Nendou, but I just meant that I erased him from my sight. To be honest, I just made sure he wouldn't enroll in this school. This is a pretty popular topic in recent anime and manga, you know? The whole butterfly effect thing. I'll try to make it right.)

So that's what you meant. But *can* you make things right?

I ask, and then Saiki Kusuo smiles.

(I'm an esper that can make the impossible possible. You're aware of that, aren't you?)

I smile as well, and then reply…

Oh, I know better than anyone.

I get surrounded by light, and I see my other self and the parallel world disappear. My sight goes blank and I can't see anything.

It's too bright and I close my eyes.

(I'll try to make a lot of friends from now on as well.)

That's the last thing I hear from his telepathy. "As well?" You've got to be kidding me.

———————◆———————

I open my eyes, and see Nendou standing right in front of me.

"What's wrong, partner? You spacing out?"

Nendou? He's staring directly at my face.

I push his face back without changing my expression. Good grief, a normal person would faint from Nendou invading their personal space like that. I

take a look around me, deep in thought. It's not summer, and I'm back in my original form, and Nendou's here. I'm back.

"Why did you stop walking all of a sudden? I know, are you hungry? Eh?"

It must be… after school, huh? I look at the orange sky, and fully comprehend the situation. I'm walking home from school with Nendou. Returning from a parallel world really messes up your sense of time, just like a manga artist. When did it get so late? Good grief, it feels as if I've been daydreaming.

"I think I'm feeling hungry too. Let's go, partner."

Having to talk about nothing with Nendou right after coming back is pretty rough.

Maybe I should just get rid of him… That's always an option.

We keep walking, and I'm still pondering.

The world is made up of countless small choices. We make decisions as we live. For example, there are plenty of choices right in front of me right now.

I could run away because Nendou is annoying, or I could kick him in the face because he's annoying, I could pour mirin into his mouth to shut him up because he's annoying, and each choice would branch out into a new world. What path should I take…?

A different future is waiting for me depending on my decision, so I have to put more thought into what I do from now on. However, maybe because of all the trouble I experienced in the other world, or because Nendou won't shut up about food, I'm starting to feel a little hungry. What a bother, I can't think straight like this.

It can't be helped, I guess the first thing would be…

Want to eat some ramen, Nendou?

I have to eat.

"Oh, yeah. Alright, let's go get some ramen, partner!"

Nendou smiles happily.

“It’s pretty rare for you to invite me, partner! I thought you were someone else for a second!”

Someone else, huh? Maybe you’re right.

Nendou’s words make me consider that right now our world is changing. A new branch has been created, and my choices will keep on affecting it.

I’ll be waiting to see where my decisions end up taking me…

“Eh? Come to think of it, there’s a good place nearby…”

And before he’s even done saying it, Nendou runs ahead of me.

I can’t read his mind, and I don’t know what he’s going to do. All I can tell is that he’s gone off, turned around, and now he’s waving his hand at me.

“Hey, I found it, partner! This place is a hidden gem!”

Noisy, aren’t you? You’re attracting way too much attention. People around us are staring.

Nendou looks happy. I sigh quietly. Nendou really can’t read the room.

“Hurry up, partner! There’s no one inside yet! Eh? It’s out closed?”

It’s because we’re standing out too much.

I see, so this is the future I ended up with.

“It can’t be helped, let’s go to that one instead!”

Nendou starts running again.

“Eh? This one’s open! Hurry, partner! Let’s get in line!” he shouts at me. We’re standing out and it’s embarrassing.

Good grief, it’s hard dealing with an idiot whose mind I can’t read. No matter how hard I think about it, there might be no point at all in hanging out with someone like Nendou. He’s beside me before I realize it, and he’s always speaking about eating ramen. What a scary guy. However…

Although it pains me, I keep walking beside Nendou.

I guess a disastrous world where you’re still around is the best.

Afterword

The previous work received positive feedback from readers and even went through multiple printings, which made me incredibly happy. But never did I expect to have a second novelization!

Thank you to everyone who read the previous work!

And a big thank you to Hinata-sensei! The success of this book is undoubtedly thanks to the inherent entertainment value of Hinata-sensei's novel!

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this work as a reader as well.

Typically, in my manga, which consists of self-contained chapters, I am unable to do long stories with battle sequences or slightly serious plots (not that they are even demanded). However, in this novel, I was delighted to see that those aspects were skillfully incorporated into the world without breaking its cohesion!

As they say, "Good things come in threes," so I hope and pray, along with the readers, that there will be a next installment.

Lastly, in the afterword of the previous work, despite Hinata-sensei's hilarious and witty writing, I ended up writing a completely ordinary afterword without any jokes. I apologize for that.

And once again, there are no jokes in this one either. I relied on Hinata-sensei.

—Asou Shuuichi

Thanks to everyone's support, I am grateful to have been able to release the second installment of the novelization.

Despite the considerable challenges, I am surprised and pleased that it has taken shape so well. Every time I see this book, it will likely bring back memories of the writing process like a flashback…

Now then, let's have some commentary with a touch of flashback for each chapter…

Chapter 1

In the story, there is an abandoned building rumored to be a haunted spot. Personally, since I don't have any haunted spots nearby, I find school ghost stories to be more relatable and easily imagined.

Speaking of which, during my student days, there was a period when I thought I might have psychic abilities. I would scrape candle wax on the edge of my desk and mix it with tap water to create something I called "holy water."

On the staircase leading to the rooftop or in front of the cursed science lab, I would dip my finger in the holy water and shout, "Purify!" while waving my hand, sprinkling droplets around.

Interlude With a Guest 1: That Person Over There

I really wanted to include Aoki Kanata. After considering various options, I decided to incorporate him into the school festival story. It may have been a subconscious association with celebrities, glamorous worlds, and festive atmospheres.

Speaking of school festivals, I once took on the important role of operating the bingo machine behind the stage where the bingo tournament was being held. Every time I pressed the button backstage, a randomly selected number would appear on the display on the stage.

By the way, sitting right next to me was a pitiful man with the title of "Button Operator 2." To this day, I still wonder why he was assigned there.

Chapter 2

I happened to come across a white coffee jelly on TV before, so I always thought that if it didn't make an appearance in the manga, I would personally buy it. I'm glad I could include it.

When it comes to coffee, it reminds me of the vending machine we had in the school cafeteria. You could adjust the amount of sugar and milk in the cup of coffee according to your preference. But when classmates were lining up behind me, I would try to show off and order black coffee. However, it was too bitter for me to drink, so as soon as everyone was gone, I would quickly go back and get a melon soda instead.

Interlude With a Guest 2: The Detective's Melancholy

During my student days, there was a time when I admired detectives. I tried to acquire all sorts of knowledge by borrowing difficult books from the library, but they were too challenging, so I returned them without reading them.

Inevitably, I decided I wanted to become a knowledgeable person who always seemed to be reading books during my commute or breaks. Among the books I borrowed, the only one that seemed readable was a book on black magic, so I proudly read that. Unfortunately, there were no instances of magic-related murders on campus.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

I wanted the final works to be dedicated to Saiki just like in the first novelization, so it turned out this way. The vision for it was kind of like a "Saiki Kusuo the Movie."

Since it had to be cinematic, I thought I should go big and wrote it with the mindset of "I want to include all the characters!" I wanted to deliver a work that would meet the expectations of readers who have followed the second novelization until the end, like "I am the world's biggest fan of Asou-sensei." It was a selfish desire of mine, but Asou-sensei and Hattori-san kindly gave their approval. I am truly grateful for that.

While I was worried about whether it would be accepted, as it involved somewhat stressful developments and battles to liven up the second half,

hearing the news that Saiki would join a game as a battle character made all my doubts disappear.

I believe this final story is a product of a miracle that wouldn't happen in ordinary circumstances.

By holding this book and reading it until the end, you have just now created a new divergence, a new possibility for the future in this world. I look forward to the day when we can meet again in the future that awaits in one of those divergences. Well then… *Eiwaz!*

—Hinata Shou

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Asou Shuuichi:

Ever since I was a child, I've always been bad at writing, including composition and novels. So, I thought I couldn't write them myself. That's why I'm really happy that someone else wrote them for me. And to have it done twice makes me even happier.

Hinata Shou:

The assigned editor directly communicated with my brain, saying *(this manuscript… needs correction…)* It seems that when you work with an editor involved in this work, you naturally gain telepathic abilities.

I was so surprised that I was left speechless *(What an idiotic editor… communicating directly with my brain?!)*. So, I also responded through telepathy.

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More new disasters for esper Saiki Kusuo...! In an abandoned building, he and Toritsuka encounter a chuunibyou, a delinquent, and a mysterious ghost?! World War III breaks out over Teruhashi's coffee jelly?! Saiki stumbles into a world where an All-Star Battle unfolds just like in a movie?! The second light novel is here on a massive scale!